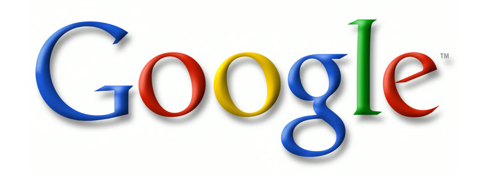


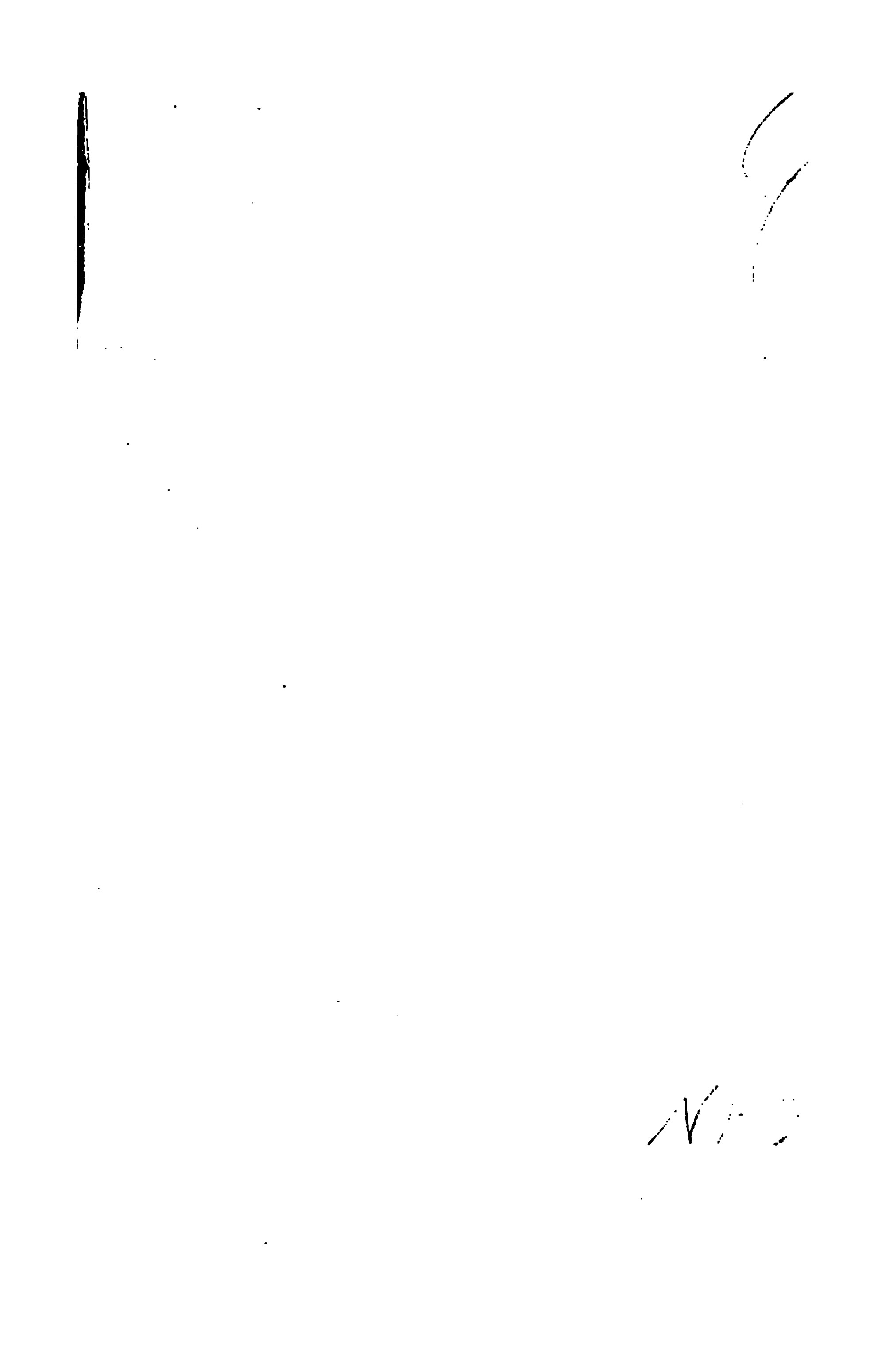
IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE

By MARY C. E. WEMYSS

Other Novels by Mrs. Wemyss

The Professional Aunt
People of Popham
Prudent Priscilla

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BY

MARY C. E. WEMYSS



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I

IMPOSSIBLE people were John Templar and his wife Joanna: Joanna, whose gentle custom it was to read to him every evening what in the morning she had written. She kept a chronicle of their quiet lives in which she wrote down those things, of no importance, that had happened to them. She found it a convenient means by which to convey to him such things as she wished him to know. If she talked, he slept. If she read, he might perhaps complain that she kept him awake: but he listened because there was music in her voice.

At the beginning of the book were written these words — "John Templar married Joanna Chrystal while he was yet an undergraduate at Oxford and she as innocent as he."

At a later date was added, it must be presumed by Joanna: "And as deeply learned one as the other in the ways of a world that did not exist outside of their own imagining."

From college John and Joanna went out into a wider world.

He became curate and she "in charge." While curate he became father, not only to his people, but

to Faith — a daughter. And although plainly exhorted to add to his faith patience, he did not do it — or even a son — and Faith died of pneumonia, following measles (faith has died of much less). She died, yet lived again in the hearts of her impossible parents. And when the wound made by her dying was so healed that the hands of other children could touch it, they adopted another daughter, and they called her Hope and gave her charity — which is love.

As Hope played on the floor, a baby of two, between the parents of her adoption, they marvelled at her grace and wondered at the ways of her. And she, too, perhaps wondered at these strange parents of hers, so unlike herself, so unlike anything she had ever seen. But then she had not seen much. A baby of two lives among the legs of tables and chairs, unless some kind person lifts her. When Daddy John lifted Hope her sash went with him, but she did not, and puzzled he would put the sash down again, rearranging the bow to the best of his ability. He had forgotten how firmly he had grasped Faith — how deeply. She had slipped from him but once and then in spite of prayer and supplication. The force of prayer lies in the prayer, not in its answer.

As Hope grew older she surprised Daddy John more and more. And people came to him and told him how clever his child was: how careful he must be to do his duty towards her — more particularly

that she was not his own. Now there was no child in the world that was not, in a sense, his own. To him children were the world's heritage. For anything good that he might ever have done in his life there was just the chance of a child's hand in his, and of a child saying, "Well done, good and faithful, funny, kind man. This, my hand, is yours in confidence and as a very great reward." And yet there were people who told him he must remember to do his duty towards Hope. John's duty was summed up in love and Joanna's in love: but it was not enough. For a plain, backward child it must have sufficed. There were even found people who would have taken Hope for little more than the honour of teaching her, so strongly did they feel their responsibility towards the child of another's adoption. They were school-mistresses, most of them — mistresses of themselves and others—and they looked to the honour of their schools and Hope heading the lists. But John could pay for the education of Hope.

On adopting her he had insisted that she should be dependent on him, and on him alone. The only other persons concerned had made no difficulty if it was clearly understood that he could afford to pay. There must be no stinting. John could pay. He was not without private means. Indeed, he had so much that people wondered he should go into the Church, which was plainly instituted to provide poor incomes for those who had none. So said John's rich relations, for whom he had little use,

since they gave not even a tithe of what they had to the poor. So Hope, it was decided, must go to school, and that was but a beginning. In time there would come the question of a finishing school. John must not lose sight of that. John, looking at the child at his knee, lifted the little hand that rested on his, and looking found it finished to a wonderful degree of perfection.

"I'm too old for little pigs stayed at home, Daddy John," she said, and from her hand he looked at her face — that, too, satisfied him. He glanced at his wife and she smiled, with Faith in her eyes, so it appeared that she, too, was satisfied with Hope as she was — unfinished. John had never known any one finished. Even Joanna, he felt, was only just begun.

"Darling Daddy John," wrote Hope from her first school, "I love it and I am going to be a consuming actress its decided beyond Hope."

From one curacy to another went John, taking with him his wife, as impossible as himself: winning love wherever they went without gaining distinction. But, to show what power may lie behind smiling grey eyes, it appeared that in those long ago Oxford days John had not been the only man to be in love with Joanna. There had been at least one other, and that one other had become in course of years a man of wealth, possessing among other things the gift of livings — good livings — and the living of Up and Down he offered to John Templar,

whose wife's eyes were as grey as ever they had been. It was their clear greyness this man had remembered through the length of years — also the honesty that lay in their depths and the twinkle in them that danced at her bidding, and at the bidding of those she liked. Certainly the living should be hers: she would make it worth while. John accepted the living, and he and Joanna became "those impossible people" in an Up and Down world.

Up and Down is a parish of hill and dale: most of the houses lie in the hollow, sheltered by the hills, crowned by the church. The vicarage stands sentinel to the church and lacks a good water-supply. "The babies shall not want for their baptizing," said Joanna, her eyes twinkling.

Beyond the village is Up and Down Park, in which lived John's patron, Humphrey Norman, who, after going to church John's first Sunday, blessed his own powers of perception, and the good grey eyes of Joanna. There *was* something about this queer parson, he told his wife as they walked home from church, and Lady Agnes — his wife — was ready enough to believe it. She was sure John Templar had the gift of healing, although she herself needed not a physician.

Between his father and mother walked Toby, aged seven, deeply interested in the new clergyman. "Is a clergyman supposed to be funny?" he asked of his mother, and his mother — not very sure — said a clergyman might be funny if he liked.

"What's a clergyman's wife for — *exactly?*" he went on.

"Oh, lots of things. She helps her husband."

"What husband?"

"The clergyman."

"What *to* — pudding?"

"Yes — she helps him to pudding."

"Two helps?" Toby skipped like a lamb at the thought, and perhaps for the first time in his life turned his mind from the driving of engines to the shepherding of souls.

"I dare say; it's quite possible," said his mother.

"What's impossible, then?"

"My dear Toby, do be quiet!"

"You said — they — were — impossible — people," persisted Toby.

"I am sure your mother did n't say that," said Toby's father, knowing, of course, that she had. Children always remember what grown-ups say.

"Yes, she did, twice to Mrs. ——"

"But, Toby darling," said his mother hurriedly, "they are very nice. You must remember that. When a new clergyman comes to a parish, he is always very nice."

"Nannie says he always is n't."

"Besides," said his mother, "Daddy chose him."

"Why *did* Daddy? Did Mr. Templar choose Daddy?"

"Shut up, Toby," said his father.

"Is it a nice thing to be, impossible, Mummy?"

"Yes, quite nice."

"Then why are n't you it?"

Toby was that kind of a child. If he were your own you would love him; but if he were not you would n't choose him to go on walks with. The people of Up and Down were not slow to discover Mr. Templar queer. They were not sorry to find him so, for village life is dull at times and lacks variety of entertainment.

One day — soon after he came — there died in the village a man most disreputable: the son of a mother (the best that could be said of him).

John's custom it had always been to preach about any one who had died in his parish. Up and Down found this a pleasing habit. It gave a renewed interest to life after the flatness that inevitably follows a death. The wonder always was how much good he had to say of those who had died, and how true that good was — "when you came to think of it." Of Ben Barstone there could be nothing good to say. The church filled to overflowing to hear how the Vicar would get out of it, with the mother in mourning by the door. He managed it. Once upon a time Ben Barstone had saved a puppy from drowning — had thrashed the boys who would have drowned it, had taken it home and nursed it back to worrying, happy ways, and had loved it.

Well, that was all. The congregation admitted it was n't much; but one woman in mourning at the door wept the tears that heal.

"Joanna, Joanna," said John as they walked home together, "between us we should have been able to find more."

"We are not his mother," said Joanna, suiting her step to her John's.

Widow Waysey, and a friend she was visiting, watched the passing of the Vicar and his wife. They stood at the cottage door the better to see.

"They do seem wonderful faithful to each other," said Widow Waysey, and her friend would have liked to say they did n't, but hardly dared in face of the direct evidence. A moment later Mr. Norman and Lady Agnes passed. "They 're discussin' 'em, sure," said Widow Waysey's friend.

"Like as not," agreed Widow Waysey.

They were. Lady Agnes was saying: "You chose well, my dear; so few clergymen are amusing and there 's surely no earthly reason they should n't be. They have enormous scope —"

"Yes, I think I chose wisely," said Mr. Norman. "She was such a fascinating little creature when he married her."

"So you always say and you always astonish me — she 's a dear — quite a dear — but such a dowdy dear."

"It 's her eyes, perhaps — it 's something — undoubtedly something."

Lady Agnes knew that and the village knew it. Joanna made herself felt. From the very beginning she counted in the village.

But she was difficult to understand. So are expeditions to the North Pole to some minds. To others they are bracing and stimulating. The man who looks to the North Pole for excitement would have looked over the head of Joanna. To Up and Down Joanna was of greater interest than the North Pole, being infinitely more accessible. So much for a point of view, so little for a point of the compass.

There were those in the village who were quick to judge her good without being strictly religious, a state of mind generally approved. The two old women fell to discussing that after the fortunate passing of the Vicar and Joanna.

"She owned to havin' lost her Faith," said the widow's friend.

"But she meant the child that died," protested the widow.

"That's as may be."

"Well, it is."

But the old woman, whose son in America had failed to remit her her monthly allowance, chose to believe Mrs. Templar had lost her faith. It made her seem nearer — more understanding — understandable and neighbourly. "It's downright obstinate some people are," she said, "who cling when there's nothing to cling to — just dogged obstinacy, that's what it is — Unless the postman took it, and he would n't — knowin' me in need!"

"Faith," said Widow Waysey, whose son never sent her anything, wherefore she was never disap-

pointed, "if you've once got it you can't lose it — it grips you tight — not you it — It's only those that thought they had it that can go losing it. There 'd be happier wicked men in the world if they 'd really lost it; but it tugs and tugs, just as it is tugging now at that postman of yours — he won't enjoy your money, not he — nor the good beer it buys — nor those drives he's a-goin' with his family on Sundays, a treat to all except the pony; if he'd lost faith, as you have, he'd be a happier man. It seems good money wasted, though, don't it?" She was out of the cottage by now and returned to say, "If I have anything to say about Mrs. Templar, — it's about her hat I would be speakin', — it's lost faith in itself, it has — it wants perkin' up a bit —" And down the village she went and on her way met the postman.

"'Mericky?" she asked, making a gesture, which, embracing the whole country-side, included the cottage of the faithless old woman.

"Um," said the postman, who liked not women, young or old. From postcards alone he had tried to read their characters, and had found them illegible.

Widow Waysey went on her way chuckling. "That hat — why, it's ready for a jumbly now — Faith? Of course it was the child Mrs. Templar had lost. It was n't the other faith, with her eyes shining like glow-worms in the dark."

II

DIANA and Googlie Norman had had measles, were recovered, had been away, and were home again knowing all there was to know about measles, but nothing of the new Vicar and his wife.

Toby had been to church that morning and knew all about the new Vicar and his wife. He was in the enviable position of knowing everything and telling nothing. Diana took up the attitude of not wanting to know, and Googlie was not supposed to talk until he was good. Therefore a profound silence reigned in the schoolroom at Up and Down Park, for the space of a moment. Diana, thinking she had saved her dignity by a prolonged silence, asked Toby what he was drawing? Toby for answer said Diana was standing in his light. It is a thing all girls do, as children. Later on it is the boys who very often stand in the girls' light — and in their own.

Toby was firmly convinced that the hymn "O Paradise, O Paradise, where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light, all rapture through and through" clearly held out a promise that in Paradise he would be able with impunity to stand in the light of any one drawing, and any one drawing stand in his light.

Diana moved out of the light. "What are you drawing, Toby?"

"It's supposed to be the new clergyman," said Toby modestly.

Diana looked over his shoulder. "He's a queer clergyman, then."

"And so he is. He's supposed to be."

"What? queer?"

"Yes," said Toby, wetting the point of his pencil; "he's impossible."

"Oh," said Diana. "What 's Mrs. like?"

"The same," said Toby, drawing busily.

"Are you drawing her?"

"Yes, it's rather difficult — because she's rather funny — I like her —"

"Why is she funny?"

"Because she is — She laughed."

"In church?"

"No — silly — outside; and Daddy laughed too — crinkled up his eyes, you know; like he does."

"Then he likes her?"

"He chose her, that's why."

"Who chose Mr.?"

"Daddy too."

"I expect Mummy did."

"Why?"

"Because he's a man and she always chooses men."

All this time (and to the child in the corner the time seemed long, although the conversation was extremely interesting and called for no contradiction) Googlie, the youngest Norman child, stood

with his face to the wall. Whatever his view of the wall may have been, his back view to others was delicious. Delicious enough to soften the heart of any woman. Googlie had been put in the corner by his mother — that same mother who always chose men. Why if she liked men so much should she be so hard towards a baby man? Because that is all boys are. Men are grown-up boys. Boys, baby men. And between them there is very little difference — just a matter of years. What's a year? To a child, an age. To a man, nothing. There's the difference. Nothing more. Merely a question of time.

Lady Agnes came into the room: "Are you sorry, Googlie?"

"Nope," said Googlie.

Lady Agnes looked from Diana to Toby, from Toby to Diana. They must remember what she had done in their day in similar circumstances. Following the suggestions grimaced by Diana, she repeated, "Are you sorry, Googlie?"

"Nope."

The most hopeless thing in the world is the child who refuses the forgiveness pressed upon him.

"I think, Googlie, you had better come out."

Googlie turned and faced the room — his mother — brother and sister — and to each in turn he bowed.

"Tired?" asked his mother.

"Nope."

"I think you had better come out."

"I will, if you like," he said, "but I'm not any better — I feel just as bad inside."

"Oh, not quite, Googlie."

Googlie nodded his head. "I do," he said, and he surely must have known.

There comes a moment when steady resistance means victory. Googlie was nearing that point. There are aunts who would have stood out even unto the eleventh hour; but Googlie's mother was not aunt to Googlie.

So he came out and he did what he had meant to do ever since Toby had described, in such an interesting way, the new clergyman and his wife. He was going to see for himself. He was going to church. It would n't take long to get there. He liked evening service, because he seldom went to it. Arrived at the church, he went in and made his way to the pew in which sat Joanna. Googlie was not the only person looking at her, of course. But none were more intensely interested. He looked and looked. Joanna grew pink under his scrutiny. Still he looked. Then, when for the tenth time Joanna smiled at him, he put out his hand and she took it, wondering who her friend might be, but not caring so long as he was her friend. He had pointed portions of the service with his sunniest smiles; emphasised certain passages with raised eyebrows and significant glances. It had altogether been for Joanna a most interesting service. When John, in his sermon, had used the word 'impossible,' this new and strange friend had smiled

at Joanna and pointed surreptitiously from her to the preacher, and nodded. "That's you two," he whispered. Joanna in time was to learn what he meant, but just then she was at a loss to understand.

The small friend went out before the rest of the congregation and he was in bed by the time his mother came again to ask him if he was sorry. "Are you, Googlie?"

"Nope." Not even church had influenced him to that extent for good.

His mother left the room, but not, as it seemed, with that dignity she had imagined hers. As she went out Googlie said, "You look a sight *behind!*"

Who was the victor now? Not the poor mother! She fretted under the thought of looking a sight behind. Who would not?

She waited, then went again to Googlie's room — this time to hear his prayers. Googlie was sleepy. Repentance must come before prayer: after prayer and repentance, sleep: after sleep — morning. Googlie went to bed every evening only that morning might come the quicker. So first of all repentance. He sat up in bed with his arms hugging his knees and looked at his mother as if *she* had sinned.

"Are you sorry you were so naughty?" she asked.

Googlie did n't say, but he slipped out of bed and he knelt. His head was very near his mother's heart. "Won't you say you are sorry?" she asked.

"I will, if you want me to — but I don't feel sorry inside."

It was a difficult moment. Googlie must have found it so. Out shot his arms and they tightened round his mother's neck. "Are n't you glad I 'm not twins?" he whispered.

It must be presumed he awoke next morning a very happy and much forgiven little boy. He rose early and went out into the garden. From the garden he wandered into the greenhouses and found himself alone among the carnations. He picked one. It broke at a joint in a most delightful manner. He broke another to see if it would. It did. They all did, and bearing an armful of pink flowers he went to the very edge of the park — avoiding the lodge gates — and looked over the wall. He accosted a man driving past in a cart. "I say, like some flowers?" — and the man liked them exceedingly and he got down from his cart, took the flowers, and got back into his cart and drove off. "I wonder what makes me so gen'rous," said Googlie to himself, as he walked homewards. "I wonder what makes me so gen'rous."

Had Googlie been older, he might have looked up the word 'generous' in the dictionary. There seemed at home such a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word. His father did n't call what he had done generous. The gardener did n't. His mother did n't. Nobody did. It was some days before Googlie went to see Joanna again. Then he went; for one reason because he wanted to know what 'impossible' meant. He knew one or two things that were impossible. Doing sums was one.

And not looking out of the window while you were doing them was another. Both of them connected with lessons. He did n't like lessons. He liked garden boys — and one or two old men on the estate. It was quite certain garden boys liked him and old men on the estate too. Googlie was a sight to look for, on wet days and fine. "That he be," would say any one of the old men, and that without being asked. And Googlie was never put in the corner by old men. That was the best of woods. There were no corners. Out of doors has none. Googlie loved out of doors. That's how he and Joanna made friends. Over a bumble-bee it really was. Joanna knew everything about bumble-bees and not only what they did, but what they thought and what they buzzed to do. To buzz means to want. Hardly any one knows what a bumble-bee wants when it buzzes. It does n't know itself.

"Oh," said Googlie, deeply impressed. "Tell me some more."

And she told him some more. He asked her a great many questions. And she answered them all directly he asked them — except this one. Over this one she paused for a moment. "How old when I'm a big boy will I be?" She told him.

"You do know a lot," he said. "Does God live in the same street as Mother Goose?"

Of course Joanna said God lived in every street.

"In turns," Googlie supposed. Then he suggested some streets were very small.

Joanna said, there was often more room for God in very small houses and streets —

"He can find his way about, I expect," said Googlie; "is that it?"

And Joanna said it was just that.

Googlie had a long story to tell about some one who had lost his way at Up and Down Park. Mixed up in the story was a bathroom and a sponge — and his mother, and a man and a housemaid, and what several people said and what they did n't say. He tugged at Joanna's hand all the time he told the story, and walked at least an arm's length in front of her, so she missed a good deal of the story and the point entirely.

"I 'm glad you 've come," he said when they parted, and Joanna could truthfully say she was glad too.

III

One evening in summer-time John sat on the lawn and Joanna read to him from the book of her chronicling. "This morning James Richards, at Middle Farm, thrashed his son Timothy, for no just cause — the boy's heart is sore. Joanna went out into her garden and, selecting a peach on the wall, tied it up in muslin, so that the wasps should not get the better of sore Timothy —" Joanna paused and, raising her voice slightly, went on reading — "To-morrow Parson John will visit Timothy — and —" She closed the book.

"Is it wise, Joanna?"

"The peach is asked to ripen, it is not asked to be wise. The peach, of course, is symbolical."

"To-morrow, you think I should go? There is my sermon to write in the morning — and in the afternoon —"

"I will make notes for your sermon — Milly Don is home — in trouble."

"And the man?" blazed John.

"How should I know, John? Is it the time to ask questions — to probe a wound —?"

"My dear, my dear," he said, convicted of violence, "you will write a tenderer sermon than I should. I will go to Timothy — you have left no

gap in the muslin? — I would make it a village sermon — it is the right occasion."

Joanna said she would make it a village sermon.

"The Stranger might walk through the village," suggested John; "it's the only thing that brings it home to them — What — if Our — the Stranger walking through the village should stop at Mrs. Don's cottage?"

"And admire the delphiniums?" suggested Joanna. "He would," she added, nodding her wise head.

"And lift, perhaps, a rose that had been trampled in the dust," said John.

"Leave it to me — You know Billy Bowles who is always in trouble?"

John nodded.

"What if the Stranger — patted him on the head?" It was a brilliant inspiration, Joanna thought; it being her own and not sentimental.

"Stick to Milly," said John. "I have promised Billy a knife, if —"

Joanna smiled and John did not ask her why she smiled. He knew.

This is all to prove them impossible people and to justify Hope, in the future, and in the past Toby, and before that his mother.

Joanna sat down to write, not only her husband's sermon, but her own letters. Her method of writing letters was this — and dangerous. She addressed envelopes to those people to whom she was going

to write. Then she arranged them in a semi-circle on the table before her and began to write the letters. In the middle of her writing she would go to the assistance of any one who wanted her — or — for the matter of that — any thing: a child upset or a bumble-bee overturned. She would soothe the one and right the other — and return to her writing.

On this summer's day she had written one letter and part of John's sermon, when she must have gone to the assistance of some one or something in distress. The letter she had been writing was to a friend and she wrote of Hope — her adopted daughter. The sermon she had been writing was of hope too — the child of a whole world. When she returned from her mission of mercy she put her letter into one envelope and her John's sermon into another and then she went out into the village — to do good.

Many things happened that day, among others an accident, and John was kept busy to run here — to read there — and Saturday night came and his sermon not read — and he sleepy — so sleepy.

Joanna handed him the envelope, saying, "You can always read my writing — besides, you know well enough what to say." Then she added, "Be merciful, John!"

Sunday morning — Again the church was filled to overflowing. Would the Vicar say something about Milly, who was home: for what reason no one knew — but that it was for no good was certain — she was crying.

"I pity the man," said one, who had plumbed the depths of John's righteous wrath.

"Who knows there's a man in it?" asked another — jealous at the thought, perhaps. Who knows!

John, a frail figure, climbed the steep stairs of the pulpit and laid before him the notes — of his — of Joanna's sermon. He pressed them out, for they had lain folded many hours in the envelope of Joanna's addressing.

He was going to take, he said, for the scene of his sermon Up and Down on a summer's day — just as it was outside. To many of them it was the most beautiful place they had ever seen. He described Up and Down bathed in sunlight, dappled in shadow. The very particular buzz of the bees they could have recognised if they had had the ear to do it and the wit: but, according to those who know, the best of us is far less clever than the smallest bee that sucks.

A Stranger — John said (more of a stranger than he ought to be) — was walking through the village. John looked through the diamond-paned window, on a level with his eyes and the eyes of the congregation followed his.

"The Stranger seems to know Mrs. Yew's cottage. He smiles up at the window where she lies in bed — you all know how patiently she lies there. She must have been watching for the Stranger. She leans forward eagerly to see Him as He passes. He passes on — admiring the neatness of the cot-

tages, the beauty of the gardens — seems surprised that Job Salting can do so well and his rheumatism so bad —"

There was a shuffling of big boots on bare boards and a gruntling mumble, and the congregation turned to look at a discomfited Job.

"You know how pretty the gardens look — each one prettier than his neighbour's?" went on John, turning and leaning towards his congregation. "You must often yourselves have stopped to look at the delphiniums and the roses? Well, the Stranger is standing now looking at the delphiniums in a garden." John paused. Every one moved, longing to look too. A child, the better to see, stood up. His mother pulled him down.

"Let him look," said John. "It is sometimes given — to little children — to see more than we see — they have — vision."

"There ain't nuffin," whispered the child hoarsely, "'cept Billy Bowles and —" the mother pulled the child down and put an acid drop into his open mouth: "Suck it," she whispered.

"The Stranger," went on John very quietly, "stoops and lifts a rose that has been trampled in the dust — with His tears He washes it clean."

Joanna ducked her head: this was John's, not hers — "He lifts it and twines it round the mother stem."

Joanna lifted her head. The people were very quiet, they understood: it *was* one of the Vicar's

village sermons — Who was he talking at? It was expected he would say at any moment, "Go and sin no more." They liked his voice when he said that. They settled themselves down. Cold water was running down the spines of some of them — and those mostly women.

John smoothed his notes and to a perfectly quiet and alert people he read: "Personally I sympathise with her. I know exactly what she feels — She is out on an adventure — her first. Life is something new and wonderful — she only wants wise management and gentle leading —"

There was a pause. The grey eyes of Joanna were upon her poor lost man. Then valiantly he rushed the position and added: "As a great woman writer has said —" And he looked at Joanna and down went her head.

"Whether we can — go as far as *she* goes," went on John, "I cannot say. It is surely women who would judge most mercifully their sisters — erring sisters — But this far we can and must go — we can understand — and to understand is to forgive and to forgive is to love — is n't it?"

Then he saved the situation by reciting a poem a little above the heads of his people and they went home profoundly impressed — and not too elated. It is well not to go home from church too elated. A joyful spirit has a good appetite. A sense of depression — on the other hand — is a saving grace.

Some one had sinned: Who? "Miss Blow's del-

phiniums are the tallest," said one child as she skipped along. But the child spoke without intention — it could not be Miss Blow.

"I like what he said about the great woman writer," said a woman who wrote for the parish magazine.

A little girl lo-oved the bit about the trampled rose. As she said so, her mother tightened her grasp on the child's hand and the child said: "Why are you holding so hard — mother — *did n't you?*"

"It's a most reprehensible habit, my dear," said John to his wife, Joanna, as they walked home. "It was the second sheet of your letter, I suppose?"

Joanna supposed it was. "How puzzled Elizabeth will be!" she said. Elizabeth was the friend to whom the second sheet should have gone.

John tightened his grasp on the arm of Joanna. She would never be finished.

IV

A MAN must take care how he preaches. Job Salting to see the Vicar; and into the Vicar's study came Job. John was glad to see Job. He had a kindly feeling for the old man who bore the pains of rheumatism with much patience and with much fine swearing. A good rounded oath became well Job's manner of speech — lending weight to its meaning.

"Well, well, Job, sit down," which Job did. It took time and there was much creaking and much ado about it.

"Now, what can I do for you?" The Vicar leaned forward in his chair and smiled at old Job — ruffian that he was and lovable.

"I've gone and lost my barrer, that's what it is, sir."

"Your barrow? That's a big thing to lose."

Job said it was a big thing for a poor man to lose and it cost a terrible lot of money.

"And you paid for it, eh, Job?"

"Well — no, sir, not exactly — in a sense I did — I worked for a wheelwright and he gave me the wheel — that's the best part of a barrer — nothin' can't be a barrer without a wheel — and the barrer —"

"Well, well, it was a good barrow and it's lost."

"That's it, sir — lost —if a woman had taken it

it could n't have been more lost — Now I've come to you — becos —" Job leant forward with his hand on the knob of his stick — "becos of that stranger you named on Sunday — as soon as you'd said it I was for gettin' up and goin' home, but what with the clatteration I make and the gapin', gogglin' ways of folks in church I daresent. You mind that stranger who looked into my garden — church time he chose, too —"

"When all good gardeners should be praying, eh, Job?" suggested the Vicar.

"Well, some may be shuttin' their eyes to things — but the wise stop at home, it seems to me —"

"You have no idea who the stranger was?" asked the Vicar.

"How should I, sir? Up and Down's a pretty enough place — folks come and go — honest too — some of them — should n't be surprised if they were."

"You can't think who the stranger was?" repeated John.

Job could n't; but he allowed that Widow Waysey had said — but —

"But what, Job?"

"But, I told her straight out — you would n't be callin' the likes of Him names — He's no stranger to you, sir, I should say, and if He is — why, there's your missus, she's friendly enough in that quarter, I should say — but if you were talking in paragorics, let bygones be bygones — and then — where's my barrer?"

The Vicar said, in passing the Parish Field, he had seen a barrow that looked as if it might belong to just such a one as Job —

"Nothin' 'gainst the barrer?" said Job, his eyes twinkling.

The Vicar held it a blameless barrow. Had Job lent it to any one by chance?

Well — it appeared he had mentioned to Widow Waysey — in passing as it were — that there it was if she wanted it to cart her 'taters. "Not that I meant it, sir; widows make barrers of men, wheedlin' 'em along — whether they want to go or not."

"Let us walk to the Parish Field together," said John; and together he and Job went, in search of the barrow, and they found it.

John wheeled it back: behind him came Job: behind Job again Widow Waysey; and she walking slower than Job thought any woman would walk who followed an honest, slow-downing man.

Joanna too had a visitor. Lady Agnes Norman came to call upon her in order to hear about Milly Don. The sermon again — this time brought home to John's own lawn, laid at his feet as it were: just as a puppy will bring to us and lay at our feet things whose very existence we have long forgotten. A man must be careful how he preaches, for there are people who — like puppies — will lay his words at his feet — and trip him up with them too. Lady Agnes sat in the vicarage garden while Joanna gardened. Joanna gardening was the quietest thing on God's

earth. A worm must have studied to be as quiet. A thrush would not have heard Joanna gardening because her gardening was an act of worship rather than of work.

At this particular moment a pink-tipped daisy was the object of her silent adoration — at least her visitor thought so. She was wrong. Joanna was only thinking: but there are women who in thinking of God in the country always jump to daisies. So Lady Agnes was not so wrong after all. She had guessed 'nearly right' as children say.

"It is wonderfully quiet here," she said, drawing off her gloves and holding out her fine white hands. She looked at Joanna's brown ones: then at her grey eyes and thought she understood why two men, at least, had cared — still cared — for Joanna. It is as inevitable for a certain kind of a man to prefer grey eyes to any other colour, as it is for a dark-skinned woman to wear brown clothes. Such things must have been so ordered from the beginning of all time.

"It is — so quiet," Lady Agnes repeated.

"The servants are out," said Joanna, subsiding on to her heels.

"I meant, rather, a spiritual peace," said Lady Agnes wistfully.

"Oh, yes," said Joanna; "John is out."

Lady Agnes smiled; pleased with herself that she was gently amused, glad that quaintness appealed to her. It did not appeal to every one.

"Now tell me about Milly Don. It is Milly, is n't it? Don?"

"Yes, it is Milly — Don — spelt D-o-n," said Joanna absent-mindedly.

"I long to help her," sighed Lady Agnes. Joanna said nothing. Lady Agnes, supposing she could not have heard (people usually heard her when she spoke — particularly in Up and Down), repeated, "I long to help her."

"She needs the help of fortunate women," admitted Joanna.

"Yes — dear Mrs. Templar — my heart aches for her. I heard about Mr. Templar's sermon, — it was beautiful — and so exactly what — they need."

"*They?*" asked Joanna, putting a blade of grass between her teeth.

"Yes — you know what I mean — But what I wanted to say is that I am interested in such a good institution where they teach girls of Milly's type — to — cook."

"Type?" said Joanna. "I suppose — she's a blonde rather than a brunette — there's a little picture, the very image of her — in the Uffizi Gallery — I think it was — a Madonna — I was wondering about her new hat — Milly's, I mean."

Hopeless Joanna! Toby might well ask — what is a clergyman's wife for — exactly?

"Dear Mrs. Templar, I mean type in another sense. It is an excellent institution. My friends and I occasionally — not so often as we ought to,

I am afraid — go down and shake hands with the girls."

"How d' you do — Quite well, thank you — I know. It's very kind of you; and if the girl should be making pastry you would shake hands — next time," said Joanna, rising from her heels. "Institutions are excellent things. One cannot praise them too highly, but Milly — is — well, let's say, an institution here."

"Here?"

"Yes, here."

"But the others?"

"Martha? She is very adaptable. Now shall we talk of something else till John comes? — I'm an impossible person."

"Oh, no," broke in Lady Agnes impulsively, kindly; "I always say you are not."

Joanna smiled. "Nevertheless, I shall have to tell him all the things I have said that I ought not to have said."

"You tell him everything?"

"No, I write it," said Joanna. And at that moment John came across the lawn towards the two women.

"Dear Mr. Templar," said Lady Agnes, "you are such nice, quaint people. Your wife has been entertaining me."

"An angel unawares?" asked John, with excellent intention.

"John, John," said Joanna, "you are worse than

your wife — even more impossible. She is well aware of the presence of Lady Agnes. Is tea ready?"

"Is there any one to get it ready?" asked John.

"Of course not," answered Joanna; "the servants are out. Milly must have a new hat; Ann Dante has eaten her old one."

"A small, quiet hat, I *hope*," said Lady Agnes softly.

"Nothing upsets a goat," said John, musing.

"I meant Milly's new hat," said Lady Agnes, puzzled.

"No hat looks quiet on Milly unless it hides her face, and then there's the little lilt of her walk," said Joanna, walking away. And two people watched her as she went — not because of the lilt in her walk.

"I have never met any one in the least like your wife," said Lady Agnes.

"No," said John, "I don't believe you ever will."

"She's a great help to you?" — and she thought of Toby.

John smiled. How quick people were to guess!

"Tell me," she went on, digging holes, as she talked, in the ground with the point of her sunshade. "You are not orthodox — are you?"

"Not so orthodox, perhaps, as Joanna — but my beliefs — such as they are — are firmly held — by Joanna."

"What *do* you believe? I ask merely as a matter of curiosity. People so often ask me."

Lady Agnes leant forward. Here at last was John

Templar about to nail his belief to the counter of her curiosity. She could never forgive herself for having allowed the vicarage to be done up in the varnished-pitch-pine-orthodox fashion. She must explain that she had imagined him quite ordinary. "Yes?" she said, "You believe?"

"I believe — in God the Father Almighty — Maker of Heaven and Earth." There was beauty in the cadences of his voice. The well-known words affected as well as pained his listener. They were as unexpected as they were familiar. He might have believed something quite different (with his profile), something out of the ordinary — and strange. There were so many new religions to choose from — some so suitable to queer people.

"But it's the Creed," she said, interrupting him.

"Yes, the dear old Creed."

"It sounds quite different in the garden — different from what it sounds in church — and yet so familiar."

"Yes," said John, "we can carry our Church differences into our gardens, but the Creed — stands."

"Of course I see what you mean — I suppose there are things we are so accustomed to — that we cannot do without them," began Lady Agnes.

"Tea!" called Joanna from the drawing-room window.

V

Elizabeth Column wrote to thank Joanna for her letter and part of John's sermon.

My dear Joanna, — If I did n't know you, I should say you had been putting John's sermon into my envelope. Where is the second sheet? In John's sermon, I'll be bound. Judging by the fragment you sent me — plainly written by you — I should say you were on the side of the sinners. Be careful, Joanna. Sinners may not be better than saints and they may possibly be worse. Don't make too much of them. I tremble for your Up and Down world. I gather that your Hopeful is coming home. Now to what kind of a home is she coming? Don't try her too high. Remember — strictly speaking — she is not yours. She inherits none of your quaint characteristics — or John's. Her father may have been a tradesman, her mother his very counterpart. He may have been an alderman. She may pine for the good things of the world — good things to eat. Her favourite text may be — "The voice of the turtle is heard in the land," which is not your taste — or mine. Well, mine it is, because it was n't your kind of turtle meant. Hope is not, I imagine, a bun-and-cocoa young woman, or ever likely to be. I met her walking in Bond Street the other day — up and down. Not in the least like your Up and Down. Judging by her earnest expression, I should have said she was choosing parting presents for discarded school-mistresses. I ventured it. I was right. If I knew what presents she chose, — an Omar Khayyám, or a silver button-hook, — I should know what kind of a young woman she is — more or less. She is at all events, this — a straight-nosed young woman — fine and honest.

You will have to plead well for sinners. I cannot imagine her generous in her judgments — yet. I should counsel this — sit down to meals or you will stand to lose. What do I mean by that? A slip of the pen — a side slip, a skid. It only remains for me to put this into an envelope addressed to my tax-gatherer and all will be well.

Yours,

ELIZABETH COLUMN.

P.S. So Milly is housemaid — is she? I suppose you have told her so, and she looks after the goats — Joanna, Joanna. You say you *naturally* did not ask the nature of Milly's sin. Is it natural, my dear? Won't every natural man and woman seek to discover it? Won't they delve and probe till they do? In your innocence you may be imagining her guilty of a sin greater than the one she committed. Be careful and again I say, be careful. Forgive this rigmarole. I am in great spirits. I am on the track of a new bird — it will be a feather in my cap if I can get a good photograph.

So wrote Elizabeth Column from her small house in London to her best friend in the country. "Write me no other epitaph," she was wont to say, "than 'Joanna Templar's best friend'; it is confession and absolution in one." Elizabeth tried to model herself on Joanna, a very large copy of a very small model. Her body was infinitely bigger than Joanna's, but her heart was smaller. She tried to make it larger; large enough to take in all sinners — sextons and septuagenarians. She assiduously righted bumblebees; but it was by rule of finger and thumb she did it, not because she loved them and shared with them a wonderful world and a happy world. Happy,

the bee would say, so long as you were right side up. Every bumble-bee has a right to that position in life. He is born to it. If Elizabeth stooped to speak to small children in the street, ten to one they cried for their mammies. Elizabeth told this to Joanna, honestly and seeking an explanation. Joanna said: "They may think it is a lamp-post making obeisance to them, and they know when lamp-posts do that to fathers, mothers cry."

Elizabeth loved her house in London. She loved houses. All true bird-nesters do. Her house was to her what a nest is to a bird. No birds live in lodgings, excepting the cuckoo, and Elizabeth was no cuckoo. A nest to be a real nest should have little birds in it at set times, but not Elizabeth's. What is right for a bird may not be right for a woman. Elizabeth was unmarried and spent the larger part of her time in photographing birds on — and in — their nests. She journeyed great distances to get snapshots of rare birds and rarely got them. She knew more about birds than most people and could imitate their noises and their cries. This facility endeared her to children and to Joanna. Older boys and girls found the faces she made trying. "No bird ever looked like nothing on earth," said one boy, arrived at that age when youth is extremely anxious age should not make an ass of itself.

"Do it again," said the children — and Joanna.

John never asked her to do it again. Perhaps he knew there was no need to ask. She was always doing

it again. Women invariably do. Elizabeth puzzled John. He liked so much — what he saw of her. But he never saw her all at once, as it were. If he started looking at her boots, he had forgotten her existence by the time he should have been looking at her face. Once on leaving the vicarage, after a month's stay, she said the happiest four hours she had ever spent had been with a reed-warbler.

"Four hours?" murmured John, mystified.

He never remembered having spent four hours with Elizabeth. But then he was not listening. He only supposed that things said on his doorstep — pretty speeches — referred to him. He knew, whether they meant it or not, people were obliged to say kind things on going away. Elizabeth was a strange woman, he thought. And yet quite unlike Joanna. She often assured him she liked to lie down in bogs and get up in mists. John believed her. Her sense of discomfort was not his. She loved, she said, Ross-shire for its hills: Perthshire for its glens; Caithness for its skies. John loved Joanna for her goodness. He thought he did: but what he loved her for was not exactly her goodness, for that can be boring, but for her power to see the goodness in others — quite a different thing.

Joanna handed John Elizabeth's letter. "I shall ask her to stay," she said; "I have an idea."

"Foster it," said John; "it may come in useful. When, by the way, did you say the Jumble Sale is to be? Most iniquitous of all Christian institutions!"

"I never send things I would n't wear myself," said Joanna, defending her faith and not her garments.

John thought over that. To what conclusion he came he did not say and Joanna did not ask. She was writing to Elizabeth, with the right envelope, under her left elbow, firmly pinned down. She had much to tell her. First of all, about Milly. There was much to tell and most of it good. The girl was responding. She was growing, not only in grace, but also in beauty. Elizabeth must come down and see for herself how truly Joanna spoke — or wrote rather. When Joanna found a good thing she was eager to share it. She had appealed to John, but he had said he had not looked at Milly. He would remember to do so. That he had not seen her seemed to Joanna an impossibility. Her beauty blazed. It lit the whole house. Perhaps it had blinded John. So different was Joanna from John that she had sent a donation to an institute for the blind — a thank-offering that was all. It was her way of saying, "Thank God, I have eyes to see the Milly He made!" Naturally she could not do it every time she saw anything beautiful. No exchequer could stand the continual drain: but Milly's beauty was of an unusual order — it must be paid for. The people in the village did not think her "so wonderful pretty," which was as well. They could not have afforded thank-offerings, when there was the rent to pay, boots to buy, to say nothing of beer — and bread.

Joanna was quite sure Elizabeth would be astounded.

Elizabeth wrote at once to say she would come. She was bound to add that she suspected Joanna had exaggerated the girl's beauty. It would hardly be safe for a girl, such as Joanna described, to put her nose out of doors. But she would come and judge for herself. Besides there might still be young birds about, and that was always a sure draw. London was no place for bird-lovers. Was Milly fond of birds? Joanna should make her interested. Nothing kept girls — or boys for the matter of that — so straight. It had given her (Elizabeth) all she needed in life — her interest in birds. It had kept her from brooding. She would rather find a rare bird than the most beautiful jewel in the world. Rather a feather in her cap than a tiara on her head. A feather dropped from the wing of a living bird, she was careful to add.

"Dear, simple creature," said Joanna when she had read the letter.

When Miss Column came to stay at the vicarage, Milly came in to the dining-room to wait. But she forgot to hand the potatoes, so exactly did Miss Column imitate the twittering of the swallows under the roof: and in its turn the piping of the robin. Milly made up her mind to wait for the lark. She would not miss that, vegetables or no vegetables. She must have waited a long time. There were limitations to the gifts of Miss Column. But intuition was

hers. She caught sight of Milly's face during the swallow song and a thought struck her. "Don't forget to remind me to tell you something, Joanna," she said. Joanna promised — and forgot.

The next morning Elizabeth was awakened by the twittering of swallows in her room. She sprang out of bed and collided with Milly, hidden behind the bed-curtain.

"I can do it, miss," she exclaimed; "don't look!"

Milly had no wish to look like nothing on earth; but she must be listened to. "Listen!" she said.

Elizabeth listened, with her head on one side, perhaps very much as a robin listens to the piping of the new generation. Who knows?

"Are you fond of birds?" she asked eagerly.

Then out it came, the great secret — the great excitement that was Milly's own — at least no one cared. "Two swallowses —" she began.

"Swallows, Milly."

Two swallows had built in the loggia — under a beam, in the corner. Their nest was to be seen from the dining-room window — from the hall window — and best of all from the loggia, of course; but there Milly did n't dare venture because of being seen — but the dining-room she dusted — was supposed to dust — and the hall too. "There are two old ones and four little ones."

Miss Column believed it. "But the little ones must be a second brood," she said.

"I'll show you, miss, — come!"

Elizabeth demurred — her dressing-gown! That did n't matter, said Milly; there was n't any one about; and Elizabeth went eagerly, following Milly, the spirit of adventure hers.

"See that beam, miss?"

Elizabeth peered, for swallows build often in dark places where the eye must get accustomed to the gloom before it can see. She saw — and straightway she forgot her magenta-coloured dressing-gown. The thought of meeting, face to face, either John or the gardener, was now as nothing. She saw Milly redeemed. Here was her salvation at hand.

"See their four little faces?" asked Milly, breathless from excitement; "they are n't proper faces — are they? They can't fly till their faces are proper, can they?"

Miss Column said it was impossible they could show such faces to the world: their mother would n't let them.

"Same as your mother would n't let you be seen in that dressing-gown," said Milly. Then she added: "I 'm very sorry, I 'm sure, miss, — it is n't only you who has n't got a mother — my mother has n't —"

Kind Milly! Elizabeth was touched. The birds had already done something for the girl — "They are nothing but wide yellow beaks — and my word, don't they eat!" exclaimed Milly.

Here Elizabeth joyfully acclaimed the maternal instinct. She had been right; birds were the salvation of girls like Milly — the lesson they taught was

complete — the building of the nest first: the babies, afterwards. It was wonderful.

Elizabeth met Joanna coming from her bath. "Joanna," she said, "I have n't asked you the nature of Milly's sin. I should no more think of doing it than you would think of asking Milly; but I should let her watch the swallows; there 's nothing like birds to bring one to one's senses."

"You dear thing," said Joanna; "the water is running for John — it is always the accompaniment to his prayers. You must wait. Perhaps you can say yours without the sound of running water in your ears. You do say them? Well, pray for us all. Hope is finished and is coming home."

So Milly, for the good of her soul, — and her senses, — watched the swallows. All day long she waited for the swift sweep of wings: listened for the eager, welcoming chatter of the baby birds as their tireless parents fed them. Miss Column lent Milly her field-glasses and at that selfsame hour Milly ceased to be a housemaid, even in theory. Her days were spent in the loggia; breathlessly she watched and, for her great reward, saw the yellow beak-faces turn into little oak-apple heads, with russet chins. From the dining-room window she could look up at the little birds. Over the edge of the nest she could see, peeping, perfectly round, proper faces, with tiny beaks like the points of fine lead pencils. With faces so perfect she felt they might face the world — or rather the sky — any day.

As she watched, she prayed she might be there to see the miracles take flight. When the miracles were three weeks old — all but a day — Milly saw them, at a word of command from their mother, climb out of the nest, and, one after the other, waddle along the beam, looking for all the world like clock-work mice. (Milly had lived in good houses, so she knew what she was talking about.) Her heart beat to suffocation. At another word of command they — one after the other — in perfect order began their wing exercises. They beat the air with their wings. "Again! Once more!" — and this several times a day. Then after the exercises, they tidied themselves up — smoothed their feathers, preened their wings, and climbed into an old nest — a had-been — in the opposite corner, and there they stayed for an hour and a half. So 'have-beens' have their uses. Young ones may come to rest in their empty hearts — let old people remember that. The hearts that have once been nests may still — when quite old — accommodate the young when the young want to rest from the surprising exertions of their new and strange life. Milly watched. Joanna peeped out of the window, saw Milly's lovely upturned face, and went to fetch Elizabeth.

Elizabeth came, looked, and agreed with Joanna that no sermon — not even John's — could do for the soul of Milly what those little miracles were doing.

"I must fetch Martha," said Joanna, "she will see now what I mean."

Martha came, her hands floury, her cheek floury, and she looked at Milly's upturned face.

"Well, Martha," said Joanna, "what do you think of that?" pointing to Milly. Joanna was weighing Martha in the balance.

"What do I think of it, ma'am? Well, I say, ten to one if there'd been no Millyses, there'd have been swallowses: no swallowses, there'd have been Millyses. Swallowses were made after the likenesses of swallowses for the convenience of themselves, not as lessons to the likes of Millyses, nor for the turning of a cook into a general — which has happened to me, or seems like it. I'm in the middle of my pastry."

"That's where Milly got swallowses from," mused Elizabeth.

Next morning Milly was up very early. When the heads of little swallows are quite round, shiny, and all the fluff gone, and their chins russet, it behoves women watchers to be up early. It was a wild morning, too wild for anything young to fly, Milly thought. She looked out of the dining-room window. She could just see the little round heads peering over the edge of the nest. The parent birds were sitting a few feet off, on the top of a window-frame, talking, both of them, as loudly as they could. There was a rush and a flutter and one little miracle was on the window-frame beside his parents, and like a flash was off into a wonderful world of wind. Right, straight up flew the little chap, out of sight. Back

came the parents, and at that moment the sun looked out to see what was happening, and into his very face, and into a world of blinding enchantment, winged another little miracle, and in a short while they were all gone — and there was the dining-room to dust — not like dusting your own nest, is it?

Milly vowed she would be a good mother, if ever she had children: but she 'd teach them to say 'thank you,' before they flew away, so cheeky; taking all they could get — "I 'm downright silly, I am, or was getting," she said as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

So to John's sermon primarily must be laid the salvation of Milly, for if Joanna had not written it, and sent some part of it to Elizabeth, Elizabeth would not have come to stay — would not have made bird noises — or shown Milly the good that lies — sits rather — in the nests of birds. And it is possible that if Milly had spent with Martha all the time she had spent with the 'swallowses,' Martha would have found out exactly what kind of a sin it was Milly had committed, and Martha might have felt it her duty to tell her mistress. And Joanna might not have prescribed for Milly the healing medicine that lies in the touch of things, young and helpless and horribly soft and so squashable. A helplessness that appeals; particularly to girls like Milly.

VI

"HOPE comes to-morrow, John," said Joanna.

John made no reply. There was none to make; Hope was coming home, finished. It was an unanswerable statement — a fact and a terrifying fact.

"Beatrice," said Joanna, "has nibbled buds off Caroline Testout, Papa Gantier, and the General."

"Who let her loose?" asked John. "Beatrice is not to blame."

"Milly let her out — she loves Tricksy, as she calls her — and Ann too — she loves them both. They are her salvation, John."

Beatrice and Dante (Ann for short) may have been Milly's salvation; they were also goats and knew themselves and each other as goats only. On Beatrice's bounty lived and flourished several village babies. Though the babies she sustained were rosier than any others, it was no source of pride to Beatrice. She would pass them by unnoticed. It was, in her eyes, more blessed to receive than to give. If ever she went through the village, it was not as a benefactress she walked, but rather as a suppliant. She made light of her gifts. And Dante? His position was assured. He was father to many goats and second to none. If Milly chose to call him Ann, it was not his fault. She had yet to learn the names — true names — of many things.

Milly sat on the stairs waiting to see Mrs. Templar. She had many things to think about, and from the stairs she could look out through the window on to waving tree-tops — scurrying clouds. She could see birds, and forget she was a housemaid. There was no beauty to her in dust — unless it danced in a beam of sunlight; then she loved it.

Milly would not have thought of going into Miss Hope's bedroom, even in her capacity as housemaid, because Martha was jealous of her privileges, and one of them was to do Milly's work if she fancied it. But Mrs. Templar called Milly in; asked her advice as to the dressing-table and its cover. Milly suggested a white muslin cover — over pink. She blushed as she spoke of such rare loveliness.

"Spotted, or plain?" Mrs. Templar put the question, and Milly voted for plain.

"Plain over pink then," said Mrs. Templar, and she surmised the number of yards required. Milly doubled it. She liked it full with bows at the corners. It was Milly who discovered the lack of a looking-glass.

"At least," she added, "one you could call one."

It became at once clear to Joanna that Hope must have something in which to look at herself. It meant occupation for a girl — on wet days. There were more ways than one, she knew, of doing hair, although she had made no change in her own way since she first met John. Joanna, therefore, knowing the coffee-pot would not serve as mirror to a

young woman newly finished, made her way up to the Normans. Lady Agnes's good looks must constantly be mirrored.

Joanna walked along the dusty road; dived down a lane with an exclamation of thanksgiving; walked between its high hedges; looked at the sky that shone between them; laughed with the birds; envied them their flight, while her shoes were dusty and her gait ungraceful.

When she was come to the great park gates, she surveyed her shoes, decided they were too dusty to tread the carpets of Lady Agnes's rooms, passed through the gates, and set off over the long grass into the bracken to clean them — and chanced upon John's patron.

"You, Mrs. John?" he exclaimed; and his blue eyes danced to the tune of her grey ones, for Joanna's eyes always danced at the sight of the man who had given John so good a living and so generous a patronage. She never asked herself why his eyes danced, because she knew she was comical enough to make the most serious man laugh — if he had an eye for dress and a sense for fashion. "And what are you doing trespassing?" he asked.

"Waiting your forgiveness of those that trespass against you," she answered; then added: "I have come to ask Lady Agnes to lend me a mirror."

"A looking-glass?"

"Yes, for a bedroom."

"Not for yourself?"

Then it entered into the mind and from thence into the tongue of Joanna to tell him that up till now John's eyes had been her mirror. She knew he would not applaud his understanding of her foolishness.

He laughed. "But seriously —"

"Seriously — Hope is coming home."

"The daughter?"

"The daughter — moreover, she is finished. She will be the only finished thing in the house, and John and I are feeling a little ravelled — unstitched — undone — out at elbows."

Mr. Norman had had John's sermon on his mind for some time. He must find out about it and he did. Without any difficulty at all Joanna told him — the last bit had been her half-sheet to a friend. It was all so simple — just a mistake — it was about Hope.

"Do you write all his sermons?"

Joanna said, "Not all!"

"This one made a great impression, and Agnes tells me you have the girl in the house."

Joanna said they had — where else should she go? To the church for sanctuary? It was no longer done. Her mother had other children at home; there remained the vicarage. It was next door to the church, after all.

They walked on in silence — walked on until Joanna had shaken the dust from her shoes.

"If she wants anything — you will let Agnes give it to her — through you, of course," said Mr. Norman.

"I think," said Joanna, "she has everything except the looking-glass."

They passed into the house. John's patron had not been speaking of Hope; but he did not say so. Joanna did not think he had been speaking of Hope, but she did not say so.

The great coolness — and perhaps the cool greatness — of the house struck Joanna afresh. It was all so well-ordered — the flowers in the big bowls were beautifully arranged — that is to say, the flowers were beautiful. The gardener no doubt 'did' them every morning. What must it be to be 'done' by a gardener? Joanna wondered if he loved one bud more than its brother. Not one was given more license — or rather liberty (the words to some may mean the same thing) than another. A studied disorder was attained by a garden hat flung on a sofa, beside it a basket of flowers, a pair of scissors, and a gardening glove. In these things Joanna recognised Lady Agnes's concession to the picturesque.

At the sound of voices Lady Agnes came into the hall. She made a pretty fuss over Joanna — was afraid she was hot! And Joanna said she never showed what she did n't feel.

"You dear," said Lady Agnes, hoping it was the right thing to say.

Had Lady Agnes a mirror she could lend? Joanna put the question at once. She would not stay under false pretences. She had not come to talk about the

weather or people — or Milly. She had come to beg the loan of a looking-glass.

"A large one?" asked Lady Agnes, thinking of one or two she would be glad to get rid of — stored in the attics.

Joanna thought Hope's face was neither small nor large: her eyes were large.

"I see: of course she shall have it. Now come and talk to me."

"I could talk better — and say kinder things — if those roses were in water," said Joanna.

"Absurd person: they are accustomed to it — come." And Joanna suffered herself to be drawn down on to a wide sofa, so wide that her legs stuck out before her, and at the end of her legs were her feet, and on her feet were her shoes. They were not dusty, but that was all that could be said for them.

"So Hope is coming home?" said Lady Agnes.

"Yes," said Joanna; and she turned her toes in till they met.

"Are you glad?"

"Very glad," answered Joanna; and she turned her toes out.

"What will she do? How will she amuse herself? You must bring her to dine."

"Oh, thank you, there are the goats," said Joanna; and she clapped her feet together and got up to go. "And John," then she added, "will be expecting me."

Lady Agnes kept her. There was much to say.

Most of it was that if Hope were dull, Joanna must send her up to play with the children.

"How are they?" asked Joanna.

"So well," answered Lady Agnes, ecstatically, and Faith tugged at the heart-strings of Joanna.

The Norman children brought the mirror down in the pony-cart. It took Milly in the middle, with a child on either side, to carry it, and then there were the candlesticks left in the cart. They brought the mirror out on to the lawn — so like children — where Joanna was gardening, and at the sound of their voices she looked up to find herself face to face with an elderly woman — so she described her — on her knees. She did not for a moment recognise her own reflection in the gilded mirror that Milly steadied (if Milly had turned the glass a very different reflection would have been hers).

"We've brought it, Mrs. Templar," cried Diana; "Toby made faces in it all the way down. He nearly made himself sick."

"I did n't," said Toby — it would take more than that to make him sick.

"The faces were so awfully good, I mean," said Diana.

"Oh, well," said Toby, conciliated. He was back from his first term at school where his faces had won him a considerable renown, although no mention was made of it in his report. "They jolly soon say what you can't do," said Toby, suffering under the petty injustices of things in general; "they —"

He stopped to show what he could do in the way of face-making while he remembered it.

"But it is n't so bad, Toby," said Diana, "and you were too young to go to school really, were n't you?"

"No, I was n't." Then turning to Joanna he said: "How are the goats?"

Joanna said they were very well. Could he see them? And judge for himself? Undoubtedly he could. Diana did n't care for goats; she would stay with the pony.

"Just imagine not liking goats — rum things, girls! I say — what *do* they like?" asked Toby.

Milly smiled. Joanna and Toby walked off arm-in-arm. Milly and the looking-glass were left on the lawn. The glass was propped up against a garden seat. Milly knelt down, sank back on her heels, and gazed at her reflection. She had no idea she was like that. It was a frightened, beautiful — tragically beautiful — face that looked back at her. Her hands stole to her hair. She pulled it this way and that; there were soft masses of it under her muslin cap. She pushed the cap to the back of her head and loosened her hair. She was still undecided which way was the most becoming to her when Joanna came back and found her undecided.

It was no longer a matter for goats to deal with — or swallows — Joanna knew that, or idiots even, like herself. She stood rooted to the ground, unable to move, unable to speak.

"I was only looking," whispered Milly.

"I know," said Joanna; "why should n't you?"

There was a pause. The girl on the ground; Joanna standing above her; the mirror reflecting the crouching beauty of the one — the short skirt and bad shoes of the other. Then Joanna said, "Milly — God gave it to you. What are you going to do with it?"

"It was her ladyship sent it — for Miss Hope. Shall I carry it upstairs?"

"No, I will," said Joanna. And she carried it in and Milly followed behind with the two candlesticks — a quaint procession. Which procession Martha watched from the window.

VII

"IF you find them quite impossible, my dear child, you must let Miss Harper know — but do try to make the best of them. And Hope? If your father — you do call him that — should tell you what I have said in my letter about you (I have said you are not a David Cox, that's all) — don't misunderstand me. One has to put things so plainly to a man of that kind. Don't you have to wake him up before you speak to him? Some of the girls were so funny about it."

Hope winced.

"I am only trying to cheer you up. Be brave, dear, — we all have something to put up with, — my dear old father hates dressing for dinner."

Thus spake Hope's drawing-mistress, — who had yet something to learn of perspective, — through the window of the railway carriage, to Hope who was bound for Up and Down.

Hope thanked her: wondered why she wore a yellow jersey and an orange tie — wondered if she changed for dinner, and into what — promised to try and put up with Joanna and John, and stood at the window to see the last of her. Miss Dane walked a few steps along with the slow-moving train, her hand on the window-frame.

"There's that Lady Somebody Something, is n't

there? I saw her picture in an illustrated weekly the other day — so she's certain to be all right — I'm so glad to have seen you off — Remember you will never sketch if you don't wash well."

Miss Dane let go, and Hope leant out to see that she was safe — waved to her and sat down. "Jomammy has never been in a weekly illustrated — I wonder if I shall ever be —" she thought. She looked out of the window. Miss Dane was n't a lady. What would it be like living with Daddy John and — How could she civilise them? Yet people loved them? But did the right kind of people love them? When Jomammy recovered from an illness the parishioners subscribed and gave her a cake-basket. Were they the right kind of people? Was the expression of their affection in good taste? She hoped she had n't made them out too bad — Miss Dane might tell the other girls — and she did n't want to be pitied. She had n't asked them to the breaking-up party. Nearly all the other girls had had parents there. But then they were real parents. Real parents you could n't help: but adopted parents you had every right to criticise — and to keep in the background — if you chose. In common justice she was bound to admit that, from what she could hear from other girls, no real father was more tender than Daddy John — but the real father was less odd — infinitely less odd. There was one girl at school who had said the right kind of oddness was an enormous asset. What was the right

kind? It was very difficult. Why should Miss Dane have dared to criticise John and Joanna? She had n't the slightest conception — had n't the gumption to conceive — how good they were. Hope was very proud of them — really. Her eyes filled with tears. Perhaps she was proud, but just for fun (she was very young) she began to picture what a home-coming might be. To a luxurious home, with a distinguished father waiting on the wide doorsteps — behind him a beautiful (fragile or imperious) mother. At one side a butler — most dignified, and at the other footmen, and a deerhound or a boar-hound, whichever ate most — or just an ordinary dog so long as it was big — so long as it was broad. At the windows old nurses, maids, housekeepers, house-maids, sackbuts and psalterers — She was asleep.

Daddy John met her at the station. No real father could have been more delighted to see her — the pleasure he showed was almost embarrassing (considering — as Miss Harper had said — he could not be expected to feel the real thing, Hope must remember that), but he need not have asked the ticket-collector if she had grown.

Joanna waited at the vicarage — at the gate — Milly at the window behind a curtain; she was crying. No one knew that, so it did n't matter, in Milly's eyes. She often cried, oftener than any one knew, especially when Mrs. Templar was kind, and she was always kind. That was harder to bear than anything. She was kind in such a funny way. Milly

could not have described it if she had tried. She would have got no nearer to it than this — not so near — that Mrs. Templar was always saying she was sorry, just as if she had trodden on Milly's toe; apologising always she was — or seemed to be! As a matter of fact she was apologising to Milly for the sins of a civilisation, but Milly did not know that. She knew nothing of civilisation, or what barbarians it can make of peoples.

Joanna looked first at John, then at the girl. Beside her he looked small. She was so straight, so splendid, so young — so critical! She looked at Joanna as though Joanna were the opposition team at a hockey match.

"How funny it is!" Hope said, stepping out of the carriage, with a dignity assumed to impress Joanna. "I imagined it all so much bigger — even Daddy John has shrunk. You were never big, Jomammy, were you?"

There was enough tenderness here to have satisfied some adopted mothers; but not Joanna. "I never was," she said, and she drew the girl's arm through hers. "What does it feel like to be finished?" she asked, patting Hope's hand.

Hope laughed. She had never felt so big as she felt beside this small, elderly woman — yet so absurdly young-looking — with the grey eyes, the grey hair, and the delightful expression. She wondered what her own mother had been like — quite different from Jomammy, of course.

Joanna took Hope to her bedroom and Hope stood in raptures before the great looking-glass — great compared with the rest of the things in the room. The pink bows were hopelessly wrong. The frame of the mirror was Italian, gilded, richly carved, though the gilding in places showed red. The glass was flanked by two tall candlesticks, as tall as many a baby of two, so Joanna had said, who measured most things by the growth of the babies in which she and Beatrice were interested.

"Where did they come from?" asked Hope; and when she was told she expressed great interest and pulled her fair hair this way and that, and looked anxiously at herself in the mirror; then, reassured, she smiled. Was Lady Agnes just the same?

Joanna said she had n't grown.

"But she is very tall," said Hope.

"Yes — very tall — and very finished."

"Describe her better than that."

"She makes me feel what a child must feel who goes to a party wearing blacked leather buttoned boots and a serge dress, when all the other children are dressed in muslin and lace and white satin shoes — Is that a better description?"

"It could not be better — only I believe you could have gone, as a child, dressed anyhow to any party."

Joanna smiled. Hope may have meant it for a compliment.

Joanna walked in 'blacked leather buttoned

boots' from the door of Hope's bedroom and she wrote in her book: "A very beautiful young woman, quite finished — true to type — wrapped in the tissue paper of conventionality, arrived at the home of her bewildered parents to-day. God grant that they may not disappoint her. The Reverend John was frightened and looked to the irreverent Joanna for strength and found her but a broken reed. In time the young woman may appear less perfect, and in proportion to her falling off her parents may pick up."

"I was not only frightened, Joanna," said John, when she read what she had written; "I was afraid with a very great amazement — she's so tall."

"Faith would have been small," mused Joanna.

"Who knows?" said John.

"You do perfectly, John."

Joanna knew it was not Hope's fault that she was tall and splendid and finished; but neither was it hers nor John's. Faults in a child, for which she and John could have held each other happily responsible, would have been faults easily borne with and quickly corrected — if not discovered, after all, to be virtues. The book of her chronicling Joanna locked away in a drawer. Hope would fill the book to the exclusion of everything else, if she let her in. Joanna would wait till she and John should be alone again when there would be nothing worth chronicling.

As Joanna was locking the drawer in which she had put the book, Hope came into the room.

"Who is the girl I met on the stairs?" she asked.

"Oh — Milly," answered Joanna.

"And who is Milly?"

"Milly? — she is housemaid — when Martha allows her to be —"

"And?" asked Hope.

"Wait one moment — I must speak to Martha — Milly is Milly Don — you will remember Mrs. Don —"

Hope stood looking out of the window and Joanna went to find Martha.

"Martha?" she said.

Martha was burnishing a copper pan —

"Ma'am?"

"I just wanted to say — if Miss Hope asks anything about Milly — I want to tell her myself."

Martha looked at her face reflected in the copper pan. "You can't go by faces, ma'am, never thought much of them myself," she said; then added, "What should *I* tell?"

"Why not you as well as any one else?"

"Is it for me to cast stones?"

"Martha — I did not —"

"It's all right, ma'am, it's these home-comings — they're upsetting things. I remember goin' home to my mother — I could n't bring myself to knock at the door — at last I knocked — and she opened it."

"And?" said Joanna softly, knowing what that home-coming must have been both to mother and child.

"She put out her arms and said — in a feelin' sort of a way — 'You're your poor father all over' —"

"And then?"

"Then? — Well, we had supper — so far as I remember — bloaters — you've got to eat somehow."

VIII

MEETING Milly on the stairs had upset Hope. When she left her room, she was delighted with herself, her looks, with the impression she had evidently made upon Joanna. She met Milly and straightway felt as if she had been a candle blown out — by a gust of wind — a wind soft, delicious — a wind that blows across fields of flowers — a happy, frolicking wind: but it had extinguished Hope, and Milly was only a girl from the village — Mrs. Don's girl — and had no right to extinguish any one. Jomammy was impossible. It was absurd to have expected her to be anything else. But — Hope found Milly fascinating. She told Joanna so and Joanna agreed: Milly was fascinating. But that Hope should see it at once gave her food for thought. Hope was always talking about her. In her admiration there lurked also a certain amount of curiosity — not altogether a healthy curiosity. After thinking for some time Joanna told Hope the particular danger of Milly's kind of fascination. Hope said nothing, but went out into the garden, walked about, then went indoors and cried — a thing she rarely did, unless at the passing of a fire-engine in London. Having cried she went to Joanna and said: "I knew — I already knew — what you told me — I don't mean about Milly in particular, but about

those things in general, but you told it to me — *differently:* I wish you had been the first to tell me."

And Joanna took the girl in her arms and drew her down until her head rested where Faith had lain all those years. "It should always be told *differently,*" she said softly.

"But Miss Harper would say it was only encouraging —" began Hope, fighting for the principles of her Principal (it was Miss Harper who had finished her).

"I wonder," said Joanna, "if Miss Harper speaks from experience."

"She has great experience with girls — ordinary girls, of course, I mean."

"Of course, ordinary girls," said Joanna.

There were many things to puzzle Hope. She was to be pitied. She had come home to a house where everything was done as Miss Harper would have said it should not be done. Her digestion was good or it must have suffered acutely. Meals were eaten when John and Joanna were there to eat them. If an old woman must be visited, the soup must wait — or go with them, for the old woman. If a sick child must be nursed, it was no time to dine.

"They are impossible people," wrote Hope to her friends, "but they are really sincere, I am sure of that; they can't like being so uncomfortable."

Her first Sunday in church was an hour and a half of acute discomfort. During the sermon some one snored, and John said: "If that is a man or a

woman snoring, wake them up — if it's a child, let it sleep on." She escaped a village sermon, but that she did not know (John preached on the Prodigal Son, which could not have applied to her — in any way). If she escaped a village sermon, nothing escaped her. She knew exactly what Lady Agnes wore — ached to know what it was Mr. Norman whispered to Lady Agnes — envying the happy intimacy it suggested — longed to know if they liked John and Joanna, or were only amused by them — an immense difference this to a sensitive relative.

When John pronounced the Blessing she was greatly relieved and greatly blessed. That was the curious part of it. Disapproving intensely of the whole thing, she felt the better for it. She felt a spirit of worship without knowing what it was she felt. She was even afraid she might be converted without knowing it — if she was n't careful. A most uncomfortable state of affairs, before she had seen anything of the world; before she had even dined at Up and Down Park. From her earliest childhood she had dreaded a sudden conversion. Joanna remembered her saying of two elderly spinsters in the village: "Miss Jones knows the very day and the hour when she was converted; Miss Blane does n't know the day or the hour — but anyhow it's made them both very ugly!"

Hope was very young when she said that; but she still felt it would be very distressing if she became ugly before she had dined at Up and Down Park.

On coming back from church she hurried to her room and looked at herself in the big glass. She was not ugly — but then she was not converted, in spite of John's blessing.

The following morning a note came from Lady Agnes asking Mr. and Mrs. Templar and Hope to dinner.

"The man is waiting," said Hope. "You can't decide in a hurry."

"Why not?" asked Joanna; "I thought you had decided to go — whether they asked you or not?"

"Yes — but you—"

"I have no difficulty whatever."

"I only meant," said Hope, "that if you did n't feel inclined —"

"To go?"

"Yes; I mean — Lady Agnes would understand."

"Understand what?"

"Why you don't want to go —"

"And why should I not want to go? It is my duty to go — for your sake."

"Yes, yes," murmured John.

For Hope's sake they would go. For her sake she would rather they had stayed at home. What would they look like?

The evening came. The fly was at the door. Daddy John was ready, waiting in the hall. He was wearing the trousers he wore at funerals, — Hope was sure of that. But he looked — very like a clergyman — he might have looked worse. She was so re-

lieved that she laid her hand on his arm and said he looked quite smart. He flushed with pleasure. "You must wait and see your mother," he said.

Hope waited and again the vision of what a mother might be sprang to her mind — a fair woman, in sequins always (not in the least what most people would have chosen for a mother). The appearance of John had given Hope courage. Both he and Jomammy were dears, really. When Joanna appeared at the head of the stairs — followed closely by Martha, who was happily weeping — an exclamation of delighted surprise broke from John's lips. Joanna was transformed. Joanna, showing at least three inches of a very white skin through the discreetly opened bodice, was certainly a revelation. Her dress was sparsely sequined, but sequined.

Hope was not sure whether the dress was put on hind part before or not . . . yet the V-shaped bit must have been meant for the front. So she decided it was the skirt that was on the wrong way round. "Is it all in one?" she asked.

"It was," answered Joanna, "but Martha divided it so that it can serve a double purpose."

It was Martha's fault, then, thought Hope. No wonder she cried.

But if Hope had but known! It was at the beauty of her mistress Martha cried. Never before had Mrs. Templar thrown herself bodily into the quicksands of temptation — she and Mr. Templar had always been so faithful one to the other — their

tastes in cooking were simple too — they liked plain things. "All the better for me," thought Martha, and so back to her happy weeping.

Seated opposite her strange parents in the fly that conveyed them slowly from the vicarage to Up and Down Park, Hope studied them with what she imagined to be impartial eyes. John was almost distinguished-looking, if quaint. Joanna was quaint and not undistinguished-looking. You would certainly distinguish her in a crowd as being different from any one else. She looked supremely happy, as a child looks going to her first pantomime — happy, yet a little apprehensive, with a flush on her cheeks and a question in her eyes — would the giants be real and bigger than churches? It was at Hope's beauty she smiled. Hope moved her head this way and that so that Joanna might catch the sparkle of the paste ornament in her hair. Joanna would rather have had Hope's hair without ornament: its pure gold was in itself a crown. She said so.

"But you are not smart, Jomammy," said Hope, and Joanna knew it. Hope wore a frock she had been assured every one was wearing — so she was well content. She wondered if Lady Agnes would wear one like it. She was near enough to London to know what was being worn.

"Are you proud of our child, John?" asked Joanna; and John, moved too deeply for words, laid his hand on Hope's and pressed it gently.

"Daddy John?"

"My child."

"You won't ask Benjamin if he admires me, will you?"

John promised he would not; but he did; and Benjamin, drawing the lash of his whip across the old horse's back, said what any absent-minded father would have expected the driver of any fly to say. And the consequence was Hope went into the Normans' drawing-room with a flaming colour in her cheeks, and the world said, "What wonderful colouring the Templar girl has — quite brilliant!" So drivers of village flys may be born for more things — and greater things — than driving.

Joanna had not been many minutes in the room before she discovered she was wearing her bedroom slippers — the playthings of any puppy that had happened their way. It was disconcerting: but of so simple a faith was Joanna that, for the space of two seconds, she closed her eyes and prayed that her feet might pass unnoticed on their way from the drawing-room to the dining-room — the rest she could manage herself — and then, opening her eyes, tucked her feet away. It was quite easy. She did not suppose she would be called upon to play 'hunt the slipper.' It was not a parochial entertainment. She wished it were. There was many a worn face she loved in the village. The worn faces here she found less lovable. The tiaras spoilt their expression — emphasising the wornness — taking away from the gentleness.

People in the country have few opportunities of wearing their tiaras. Lady Agnes afforded those she knew an opportunity once a year. On which occasion she herself wore nothing in her hair — nothing round her neck — nothing on her fingers; sometimes a rope of pearls around her waist. It depended on her mood. "Such a funny place to wear pearls," once said one of her guests.

"It must take a long rope," said another — a woman; but she had only the slightest possible foundation for making such a remark, and a display of temper hurt Lady Agnes as little as a display of diamonds would have done. She could have displayed both if she had chosen. Hope wished she had not worn the glittering ornament in her hair. She could n't tuck it away as Joanna did her slippers. And her frock was not in the least like Lady Agnes's. She had seen dozens of models, but none like hers. Later on in the evening, when some one admired Lady Agnes's frock, she said, "It's rather jolly, is n't it? my maid made it," — which Hope did not believe. Two or three people told Hope she had grown. Two or three said they had known her since she was 'so high.' The thought that no one could say he had known her since she was born troubled her.

A young man introduced to her said, "Don't you get tired of people who have known you ever since you were born?"

Hope could n't say she had never met one, so she said: "Dead tired."

"Tell me," continued the youth, "who is the Johnny who looks like a martyr about to be thrown to the lions?"

"My father."

"Oh — I meant the other."

"No, you did n't; he's much too fat — besides, it's a compliment; it means my father looks like a saint."

"He does," said the young man.

"He is," returned Hope, and she glowed with a sense of satisfaction at having championed Daddy John. She was loyal. She had made up for lots of things she had thought.

"And your mother?" asked the young man. Hope told him which was Joanna. He turned and looked at Hope. "How surprised they must be when they wake up in the morning."

"At what?"

"Can't you guess? Why, at you!"

This was all very pleasant to Hope. It was quite clear that however dear and delightful John and Joanna might be they were not the parents any one would expect to be hers. She had always felt it and known it. Dinner was announced and Hope watched the procession of guests pass — not one man like John: not one woman like Joanna. Yet the man who walked with Joanna looked quite happy: and the woman who walked with John, happily religious — *dévote* even. You had only to come into contact with John to feel that — the woman's hand

lay on his arm. Hope was pleased to find herself amused by her parents; this might prove the solution of her difficulty. The young man who had already shown an interest in John said he was sure the martyr was a flirty monkey, which sally seemed extraordinarily witty to Hope. And of course she fell in love with the young man who made it — just as she was bound to fall in love with every young man she met — whether he were earnest or gay — during the first few weeks of her emancipation. She had been warned against it as a great danger — told to fight against it: but at this her first dinner she fell wholesomely in love with the man who took her in. She fell in love with his studs, his links, with the way his hair grew. Loved him for the mystery of his everyday life — so hidden from her — so difficult to understand, to imagine. He talked of horses, dogs, and grooms. It all sounded so rich, so happy. He had just the kind of home she longed to have — such good breakfasts. His mother hunted. That alone was an extraordinary thing to have, a hunting mother. Imagine Jomammy hunting!

Then the young man confided in her — asked her advice. About his moustache? Did she like him without one? Of course, she had never seen him with one. "It was a companion," he admitted. "But I shaved it off because it was n't trying."

Hope thought she liked him without.

"You do like me then?" he asked.

The dinner was much too short. After dinner Mr. Norman talked to Hope, and mostly of Joanna. Naturally he was not so interesting as the young man had been. The young man was talking to another girl. The girl was laughing. Hope wondered at what? Was he asking her about his moustache?

Joanna had thrown all restraint to the winds and was sitting with her slippers plainly visible (treating prayer as people so often treat it — making an answer a practical impossibility). After all, she reasoned with herself, there could be no doubt as to what had happened. There were people in the world ungenerous enough to believe that a woman with a hole in the heel of her stocking must have started out with a hole in the heel of her stocking; but no one could suppose she (Joanna) had meant to wear bedroom slippers. If it had been blacked leather buttoned boots there might have been doubt expressed: but this was no 'blacked-leather-buttoned-boot' night. Oh, she was enjoying herself so! And of what was she talking? Worms — just garden worms. But it does not matter of what you talk so long as it is to the right listener: to the listener who looks interested. In that there is art.

Lady Agnes asked the man who had taken Joanna in to dinner how he had got on. "Delightfully," he answered, "most charming woman. She told me how to rid my lawns of worms — spread mustard upon them and the worms come to the surface. I don't take mustard myself; but I shall have no diffi-

culty in procuring it. One is bound to have mustard in the house," he murmured, thinking perhaps: "If mustard, why not Joanna?" How delightful it would be if he could feel certain of finding her always in the house — somewhere.

"She's a darling," said Lady Agnes; "I must n't take you away from her." And back to Joanna he went, only to find her surrounded.

"What *is* it about the woman?" asked Lady Agnes of another man.

"She's so human; is n't that it?" he answered; and Lady Agnes supposed it was.

And John — what of John?

His evening was happily without history until he rose to go: then, in saying good-bye to the kind woman who had taken him in, not only to dinner but during the whole evening — he bent down and kissed her. "Good-night, dear," he said. "I shan't be long," and went on his way undismayed.

And the woman, straightening her tiara, said: "After all, he is a parson, and to be kissed by a man who does n't know he's doing it leaves no stain on a woman's reputation. Agnes, my dear, you've given us a most delightfully and unexpectedly amusing evening."

But Hope? She was crushed — disgraced. Any one who remembers what it was to be young will realise how crushed, how disgraced.

"What is it, dear?" asked John, laying his hand on hers as they drove home.

"You kissed that funny old thing with diamond cornsheaves on her head?"

"He could hardly have chosen more happily, my child," said Joanna. "I admit that in his position he ran a risk in kissing any woman: but it is to his credit that he chose the oldest woman in the room, and I believe the sleepiest. And you must remember, Hope, he kisses me at ten o'clock every evening and has done so for years — a man cannot break himself of a habit all at once. Therefore at ten o'clock he kisses. John!" she said, laying her hand on his, "you kissed Mrs. Strong, wife of the member for Dulling; don't do it again."

"I don't remember," said John; "it was a very pleasant evening."

So perhaps John, like Erasmus, found kissing 'a custom which cannot be too much admired.' It is not remembered against Erasmus that he found it so; but rather does it redound to his credit. For to find a divine human, makes humanity more eager to model itself upon the divinity — the human side of it, at all events.

"There's some rouge on your cheek," said Hope to John.

"Dear, dear!" said John. "On one cheek? Then I stand exonerated. You may have read that a lady once asked of the Archbishop of Paris if the devout might wear rouge, or was it forbidden by the Church. 'Madam,' replied the Prelate, 'by some Churchmen it is forbidden, and this perhaps seems too

strict: by others it is allowed; perhaps you may think this too lax! I should advise a middle course. Wear it on one cheek and not on the other.'" And John sought to wipe the rouge from his cheek.

"Archbishops must know, of course," said Joanna, "but I should have said the middle course was the nose," — and she slept.

Hope knew why the young man with the hair and the studs and the links did not call. Youth knows so much: would be so wise if it knew less, and would no longer be young if it knew it knew nothing. Why the young man did not call was this: When he had asked the other girl if she admired Hope, the other girl had shaken her well-groomed, well-shaped little head and had said, "She's spoilt herself with that thing in her hair. Where does she come from?"

Hope would never know that — although in time she must discover the power of "the other girl."

IX

HOPE thought continually of Milly. She did not like her, did not want to speak to her: but she sought her in the garden and found her, picking fruit.

"Why did you do it?" she asked. For a moment Milly did not answer. Hope was ashamed of having asked the question and supposed Milly was ashamed to answer it. "I ought not to have asked," she said, waiting to hear.

"What's the harm," said Milly, "if you want to know?" She pushed her hair off her face with the back of her hand — held up her hand, stained with fruit juice and laughed: "It was the glitterin', miss, I did n't know it was valuable — I 've seen as good in crackers —"

"The glittering?" asked Hope, puzzled, forced against her will to admire the grace of Milly, the beauty of her arms, the delicacy of her features, the beauty of her colouring, — "the glittering?" she repeated.

"It was always the same, when I was a child — it would be the stars one time — the moon another — shining in a puddle — I ran home to get a spoon to spoon it up to take home — the water ran through my fingers. The shining of windows in the evening, I always wanted them: you don't know what it is to want beautiful things." The girl sank

on to her heels and looked up to Hope, her face alight with expectation, pleading for understanding. Hope was the first who had demanded an explanation. She had had it ready for weeks. She wanted desperately to make it. "If the ring had n't fallen on the floor and rolled away, and winked at me, I would n't have done it — but it — Well, miss, I just had to — I did n't know it was valuable — I saw you through the door last night, trying on a shiny thing round your head. My word, did n't it make you a beauty! That's what I feel about things that glitter. I kept it two or three days because of the shining — the ring I mean — and then it was missed, and I gave it up. Yes, I did — and I did n't say I had n't taken it on purpose, because I did n't see how they could believe I had. But I was sent home. The lady did n't — prosecute — because — I don't believe I could have borne it — there's no sun in prison — no moon — no stars — no dew —" And Milly burst into tears. She had made her explanation.

"But, Milly," said Hope amazed, "is *that* — what you did?"

Molly nodded.

"Oh!"

"But thievin''s bad enough — to be accused of it — what more d' you want? D' you want to be more sorry for me? You're not for sinners, are you? You're too tidy — and you *may* wear glitterin' things round your head —"

"Be quiet, Milly; I only meant that Mrs. Templar thinks —"

"I don't know what it is she thinks, but it's something pretty bad — because she's so kind. She is n't one to ask before she forgives. She never did ask — even after she'd forgiven. She gave me the goats to look after and the swallowses to watch —"

"Swallows, Milly," said Hope.

Of course Hope went straight to Joanna and told her — told her that Milly was a thief, neither more nor less (she left out most of Milly's explanation), and Joanna, most amazing of women, cried for joy: then sobered at the thought how readily she and John had believed the worst of the poor child. Hope was exasperated at Joanna's point of view.

Joanna went to John and told him. She trembled with emotion. It is not every one who can find joy in discovering a fellow-creature — and one he cares for — a thief.

"We judge too hastily, Joanna," he said.

"No, no, John, we forgive too hurriedly — we forgive without knowing what it is we forgive."

"It is better so. I have known forgiveness come too late. Besides — I was going to say —"

"What?"

"That, if you had known, you would perhaps not have been so kind to the child — and yet kindness may have done her some good — even if she is not bad enough to deserve it."

"I think," said Hope, who had joined these two

impossible people, "that you must try and remember she committed a theft."

Hope saw no occasion for rejoicing and, curiously enough, Milly had ceased either to interest her or annoy her.

A day or two later Joanna had every reason to remember Hope's words. She missed a ring. It was of small value, but undoubtedly it glittered. She had taken it from her dressing-case, wondering if she should give it to Milly. Would it satisfy her craving for something that glittered? Or would it be pandering to her? Weakening her power of resolution? She decided it would — was sorry that she must decide so — knew that if she had been the wife of a tinker, tailor, soldier, or sailor, she would have decided otherwise: but, being the wife of a clergyman, — she put the ring on the dressing-table.

Going to her room later in the day to count the money in the missionary boxes, she missed the ring. She looked for it everywhere and could not find it; so she proceeded to count the pennies in the boxes. How many pennies would it take to teach a little black girl or boy not to steal?

There was Milly not taught yet. How many pennies would it take to teach Milly — how many?

Joanna arranged the pennies in heaps of twelve. Among them, no doubt, were Milly's pennies, pennies she had given generously of her poverty. Joanna did not know what to say to Milly. She could not tell

her of what she had thought her guilty before. Poor, innocent, beautiful child! She could not accuse her now of theft on the slender evidence of a missing ring. Ten piles of pennies — ten piles of twelve pennies. What are ten piles of pennies among millions of little black boys?

Joanna had put temptation in Milly's way. She had been so busy shielding her from one temptation that she had driven her into another. She had taken her from the village, believing danger to lie there where men were. She had failed hopelessly. She should have been anything rather than the wife of a clergyman — the wife of any man better than the wife of a clergyman. She thought of the day when she had told her father she was going to marry John Templar.

"And you think you are fitted to be the wife of a clergyman?" her father had said; adding — "He is going to be a clergyman?"

"He is."

"And you are fitted, you think, to be his wife?"

"Admirably fitted — since he is certain of it."

Joanna could still hear the sound of her small voice — almost lost in the big room.

"Then you are no daughter of mine," said her father, in no still, small voice. It had echoed in the rafters — mocking Joanna as it played hide and seek in the oak beams.

Joanna remembered how she had gone that day into the woods to seek comfort and had found it.

Nature had always been to her a healer: a layer-on of hands. The leaves whispered to her; the branches bent down to shelter her; the shadow and sunlight played with her: the breezes sang to her — or it seemed to her that they did — and so, of course, they did.

Now she must go to the woods again to spend the day alone and wrestle with the soul of poor Milly. Joanna was aching with disappointment: not even John could comfort her. She had failed and Hope knew it. She walked a mile or two and went into the woods of Up and Down Park. She was certain here of solitude. There was no public path: no one would come. She could think it all out by herself; pray for Milly; for herself; for John; for Hope; and decide on her new dress. There was no reason why she should n't pray about that. She hated clothes. She sat down — sat perfectly still, her eyes fixed on the beautiful scene before her, — the green of the beeches, the delicate tracery of their branches against the sky; the slim beauties of their stems, the undergrowth of brambles, and here and there bracken. The noises she loved — the scuttling sounds of hurrying rabbits; the knocking of woodpeckers; the sharp snapping of little branches; the rustling of leaves — all were sounds dear to her and familiar. Insects had no terror for her. The world was theirs as much as it was hers. She disliked being bitten and stung; but she did not blame the biter and the stinger. To them she was there, and was made, but for that

purpose. What other? Everything in nature is made for some good purpose. Insects must know that as well as we do — it is, no doubt, one of the things they are taught when they are young. The squirrels knew her, and trusted her so far as to come close to her where she sat. All this friendliness was for her, and in return for it all she had not even the understanding to save Milly — a beautiful child, given into her hands to mould as she would. She had thought her guilty of a sin she had not committed and forgiven her for what she had not done, and had put another temptation in her way. Joanna went back in her mind — years. Through all those years she saw herself plain, uninteresting, untidy; with ugly shoes and thick stockings, and belts and skirts that did n't meet at the waist; neck-bands that would n't stand up and hats that would n't stay on — dowdy, dowdy, dowdy! She supposed that if she had looked like Agnes Norman — or as nearly like her as possible — she would have had more influence with girls. They would have worshipped her, Milly might have wished to be like her — but nothing about her glittered except the tears in her eyes when she — laughed.

She drew from her pocket a page torn from a newspaper — and read, "This can be worn as a walking gown," — 'gown, I must remember that, not *dress*,' — "or with a very slight alteration can be fashioned into a garment suitable for the smartest occasion. The material here chosen is a soft crêpe,

carried out in a lovely shade of dove grey, the plain front panel with a crossover effect at the top would be particularly becoming — to — a moderately full figure. The fitting back is buttoned above the — gathers — of the — skirt — and extended under the arms — also — in blue — it is a graceful — costume — with — embroidered — motifs —" Joanna closed her eyes, the glinting sun kissed her eyelids — she was asleep.

John's patron, passing that way with his woodman, found her asleep and smiled to see her smiling.

"It's Mrs. Templar," he said.

"Aye," answered the woodman.

Mr. Norman said she was evidently tired and the woodman said it seemed so, adding that it was little wonder, she worked too hard for others—"That's it!"

"She does good?" asked Mr. Norman, anxious to hear his choice approved.

The woodman laughed as he marked a tree. "Go and ask at any cottage, sir; you'll hear the best of her from the worst. You'll hear the best of the worst from her — she's one to laugh, too. She cured old Rob Saw of his quinsy."

The squire asked "How?" He dabbled in patent medicines and strange cures, recommending them to others (as healthy people are wont to do) without himself trying them.

"Just with a joke, sir; made him laugh."

"We'll do the rest to-morrow, Woodrow. I will wait and speak to Mrs. Templar."

Woodrow passed on, and as he went he smiled: "A good joke, it was that had cured old Rob —"

Mr. Norman sat quite still, looking through the green tracery of branches, finding something in them of the beauty Joanna had seen, without understanding it so well, perhaps.

His thoughts would have astonished Joanna if she could have known them. He was wishing his Diana might grow up to be another Joanna — as good, as generous, as gentle a woman — better-dressed, of course. How had anything so strange happened as this little woman, with the power to fascinate, who had no beauty — the power to inspire love, who never demanded it?

Joanna awoke — sat up — rubbed her eyes and saw John's patron.

"I've been asleep," she said; "I wish one could always sleep out of doors." She did not ask why he was there, or how long he had been there. The woods were his, not hers. They belonged to him as much as they did to the spider who was crawling over her hand.

With her other hand she broke a twig from a branch just over her head, and held it out to the spider, who straightway adopted her way of thinking and swung itself to the ground, alighting beside John's patron. He, great man that he was, moved away and Joanna laughed. Then she remembered she had come to grieve. But she could not. It was a lovely world — all green and gold. Green and gold? No, dove grey

— blue, embroidered with motifs? she remembered. What a world — hideous!

"Why are you alone, Mrs. John?"

She said she had come to think.

He asked her, About what?

Why should she tell him? she asked.

Well — he laughed — because, for one thing, he was interested. That perhaps was not the only reason. He was inquisitive. Put it that way.

Joanna sat up, locked her hands around her drawn-up knees, and wondered where she should begin. How much could she tell this man about Milly without prejudicing him against the child?

"I don't know where to begin — if only I knew what attitude you take towards —".

"Sinners?"

"If you call them so — sinners."

"I would be guided by you."

"That is an evasion," said Joanna, and she unclasped her hands and held them out, in a way that reminded him of his wife. It was a mannerism of hers; Joanna did it unconsciously. She held out her hands and on the finger of her left hand — above the wedding-ring, something glittered. A small ring — a band of gold, set with small diamonds. She buried her face in her hands; there was no need to tell him anything about Milly — so she cried, and she laughed.

"Mrs. John —" he said and got no further. There was nowhere to go — he was helpless.

Joanna lifted a tear-stained face and laughed to see the concern in his.

"Tell me what it is?" he pleaded.

Joanna told him she had failed, failed hopelessly and utterly and ridiculously. She had believed Milly guilty of one thing, found her innocent of that: believed her guilty of another — and now innocent of a third, which meant that out of three sins she was innocent of two and had never meant to commit the other — a good enough record. Did n't he think so?

Mr. Norman said he did n't know of what Milly had been discovered guilty, or of what she had been proved innocent. Of course after John's sermon they had been forced to believe —

"That sermon — don't!" said Joanna.

"The whole thing has been wrapped in mystery," said Mr. Norman.

Joanna told him the story of the ring; how she had taken it out of her dressing-case meaning to give it to Milly, had decided not to — and had evidently slipped it on to her own finger — without knowing it — and, missing it, had believed the child had taken it.

The little ring winked in the sunlight, and John's patron had never seen Joanna so happy, or so thankful for anything.

"In order to really love people, you must first forgive them?" asked Mr. Norman, — "is that it?"

"It may be," said Joanna, "and after all it's not so difficult."

"I hear John's sermons have been greatly appreciated — his village sermons. One old woman says — it's brought things so close — *things* — you know what she means?"

Joanna nodded; she had it in her mind to say it was perhaps the old woman's rent day that was near, but she did n't. "Yes, I know. I suppose I do."

"This same old woman tells me she knows a young man who was out with a girl the other night, meaning no good by her (the old woman's words), and the young man said, as they walked along, they were not alone. On the other side of the girl walked — the Stranger. Now, Mrs. John, have you failed — failed so utterly? Were not the village sermons your idea?"

Joanna shook her head. "I am much too matter-of-fact — they were John's idea."

"You only carried them a little farther than he did?"

"Women always do — given an idea they run it to death."

"Yes, that is perhaps what I mean — you took it farther than he did — into the rooms of the dying —?"

"No, no — that is John — I am quite an impossible person — but I am going to turn over a new leaf. Let me read you this — to show you on what my heart is really set — 'The material chosen is a soft crêpe, carried out in a lovely shade of dove-

grey' — like your tie, I expect — 'The plain front panel with a crossover effect — at the top — would be particularly becoming— to a moderately — full figure.' Mr. Norman, it is the people who write that and read it that are to me the impossible people. Not who write it; no, they do it for their living —"

"The Stranger would n't know you if you were dressed like that," said John's patron, rather to himself than to Joanna. Joanna did not hear him. He was glad. Of these things it was not his habit to speak, nor was it Joanna's to hear things she was not meant to hear; but she remembered them.

X

THE whole question of Milly's future was now entirely altered. She was innocent of most of the things she had been suspected of — if not all.

Joanna on her happy way home, out of the wood, decided that Elizabeth should have the child. When Elizabeth had stayed at the vicarage she had suggested to Joanna that Milly should come to London and study, with her, bird photography — becoming in due course of time her assistant. The girl loved animals and natural history — adventure held her; these things were evident. She was longing to spread her wings. Joanna wondered how she would manage it if she spent the greater part of her time and the larger part of her person under a square of black velvet. "No, seriously," Elizabeth said she meant it. Why should not the girl come?

Joanna had been touched by the kindness of Elizabeth: but Milly had grievously sinned, Joanna thought so then, and there was no getting away from it. Because her sin affected Joanna profoundly — made her feel a mother to all erring creatures — it was no reason it should affect others in the same way. Usually it had the very opposite effect. But Elizabeth argued that she knew all about Milly (she knew nothing really), and was still ready, in spite

of everything, to take her — to take her away from all her other companions and surroundings.

Here had been another difficulty. Joanna did not know who her old companions had been. The worst of them — the most dangerous — might have been, and might still be, in London. "We don't know the man," she had said, and Elizabeth answered that she did n't either; but she knew Milly, and wanted her. Now, Joanna decided, Elizabeth should have Milly. But she must write first of all and tell her that it was only of stealing Milly had been suspected. Elizabeth, she knew, would rejoice with her.

It was an ecstatic letter Joanna wrote, full of deep thankfulness. Now Elizabeth was accustomed to think of some sins as possible — if not excusable: stealing was not among them. Her face grew grave as she read Joanna's letter. She was not sure she could have Milly, after all. So much for a point of view!

But Joanna had so little doubt of Elizabeth's delight that she was sending Milly, by a certain train, then and there; and Milly arrived, almost as soon as Elizabeth had read the letter, looking very beautiful, with a narrow ring on her finger and a light in her eyes. Directly she saw Miss Column she began making bird noises, and Miss Column could n't explain the situation to the small telegraph boy who was waiting in the hall. The boy wanted no explanations: the noises were good enough for him and he gazed at Milly with wide-eyed admiration.

"Milly," said Elizabeth when the boy had gone and quiet was restored, "you must n't —! You imitate birds very well — very well — but there are places in which it is unsuitable to —"

"Church, miss?" said Milly, eager to agree.

"Yes, church, for one."

"I love little birds, though, in church," said Milly; "it's a pretty idea, is n't it?"

Miss Column was bound to admit it. No bird in church, or anywhere else, could have looked as pretty as Milly looked as she stood in the hall of Elizabeth's house.

"Well, Milly, I'm very glad to see you."

"Every one is very kind," said Milly. "I often wonder why."

It was puzzling. And there was the ring too. When Joanna gave it to her she said, "Milly, this was my mother's ring. She was a very fascinating and beautiful woman." Then she added: "You will be good?"

"Who would n't be with this?" said Milly, holding out her hand and turning it this way and that, to show how the ring glittered. And Joanna sighed.

The transition from housemaid to photographer's assistant was not difficult to Milly. There are many housemaids who would make better photographers than housemaids: better anything than housemaids. Milly was told she must dust the dark room and it suited her exactly; which shows there is a place for every one — even in the dark places of the world

— if only he can find it. Milly had found it, and the first time a plate grew under her hand into a picture was a moment she never forgot.

Mrs. Templar.

Dearest Madam [she wrote to Joanna], I am quite safe and I like it very much. London is very dirty, but you don't see it in the dark room. I keep the dark room clean and I do whatever Miss Column tells me. I have developed one photograph all by myself. Miss Column showed me; it's of three darling little birds on a bough, and they only weigh one ounce each [spelt *oz*]. You can spoil photographs if you are n't careful. I hope I shan't ever do anything so bad as that. I wear the ring you gave me round my neck inside. It helps me more to be good if everybody does n't see it, I don't know why. I think I am a funny girl. I like the streets in London after the country for a change. I think Miss Hope would like it. I should like to see her if she comes. If I see her I won't speak to her in the street, so she need n't mind. I think she is very beautiful. I am very happy and I am getting very good at my work. Miss Column is going to Scotland some day miles and miles from everybody to photograph a bird that lives on the seashore, I am going with her. I remember all the things you told me.

Your obedient

MILLY.

Please give my love to the goats. I think little birds are beautiful little things — you ought to learn all about them, but goats — little ones — are beautiful too, but not so beautiful as baby donkeys.

Elizabeth wrote to Joanna: —

Dear Joanna, — I am so glad I took the girl. She shows a really remarkable intelligence and has certainly devel-

oped an aptitude for photography. Her anxiety to learn is most touching. The worst possible sin to commit in her eyes is to spoil a plate — all other sins she has forgotten. About that ring? Poor child, I imagine it was only the glittering that appealed to her. She picked it up as she would have picked a dew-dropped daisy. [Worthy of Joanna this.] She had no idea of its value. I mean the one she really did take, not the one you thought she had taken. I am a little unhappy at the admiration she excites in the streets.

It does n't seem to matter what she wears. I suppose there are girls in London, as pretty, who get through all right. When we go to Caithness she should be safe enough. I believe she'll discover a rare bird yet — she's most extraordinarily keen. I sometimes wonder if she realises all you did for her.

Yours,

ELIZABETH.

Joanna folded the letter and smiled as she folded it. She was quite certain Milly would discover an entirely new bird, if Elizabeth would let her; and Joanna knew Elizabeth would n't put even the smallest of its feathers in her own cap.

XI

John and his village sermons became known to all the country-side. Villages became jealous one of the other, claiming that the gardens in one were as beautiful as in another — the sinners as good, the saints as bad. Would Mr. Templar come and describe the Stranger walking in their villages? In one village there was a new institute: in another a new public-house.

So it came about that John borrowed of Lady Agnes a grey donkey she had brought from Egypt; and, like an itinerant preacher of old, went from village to village preaching; Joanna, as often as not, on a bicycle before him, or behind him, as the grey ass willed it.

This was more than any adopted daughter could stand, and Hope said she must go to London where everybody was not mad or nearly mad. To Joanna she gave another reason. She was going to study for the stage; which, if she had but known it, was a far madder thing than ever John did in riding a grey ass, for he was a better rider than she would ever be an actress.

It is to be questioned whether John ever looked happier than when he was riding upon an ass from village to village. Strangers meeting him were awed by the beauty of his expression: but most people

who knew him came to the conclusion that he really *was* mad. They would — to some it is only the unknown that is beautiful. One enthusiastic admirer told him how happy he looked — laying stress on the word, 'you,' and her hand on the donkey's neck, meaning John to understand that she understood what it was that gave him that look of deep spiritual happiness, and John, understanding, said: "I was always fond of riding — even as a boy."

One morning Hope walked into John's study. She wished to speak to him.

"Speak, my child," he said, and drew a chair to his side, begging her to sit down.

No, she would rather stand. She was about to fight a battle. So she supposed; she knew the opposition would be tremendously strong. The choice of weapons was hers — words. The weight of his hand on her shoulder was too fine a weapon. She had nothing to match against it.

"Well," he said, "don't be frightened!"

Frightened? She laughed at the idea. She so strong, so determined; he so fragile and so gentle. Strong only in bigotry, the strength that always goes with physical weakness.

"I want to go on the stage."

The immense pronouncement was made. The clock still ticked. Daddy John still smiled. "I suppose," he said, "we are all on the stage."

"I mean the real stage," said Hope impatiently.

"So do I."

"I mean London."

"And the provinces — they come first — travelling by train — acting one night here — another there — very uncomfortable."

"I have — influence."

"Have you? It's a great thing to have — for good."

"I mean, I know an influential person."

"Send him to me," said John, smiling at Hope.

"It's a She," said Hope, and she laughed. It was all so unlike anything she had expected. "You don't mind?" she asked, softening. She cared more for this adopted parent of hers than she knew.

"Is it for me to mind? It is your life, my child. I did not give it you, therefore I cannot claim the right I might claim — should like to claim. If you cannot see happiness with us, you must go and find it for yourself — but remember, Joanna and I are always close behind you."

"Then you don't mind?"

"No — I don't mind — I shall wrap you round in a mantle of God's love — you don't mind?"

Hope fidgeted, the conversation was taking the turn she had dreaded.

"Then may I take steps?" she asked.

"Yes, but lift the mantle before you step — it's a little large for you — but you will grow to it — when you are finished," and John held out his hand. Hope took it, then dropped it. He was impossible —

"Impossible — impossible — people," she wrote to a friend — the friend with influence. "I shall

come later if not now. I told my father if I stayed I must be allowed to do something. Everything is so ridiculously unbusinesslike here. He says I may do what I like — in the parish — so I am going to try. I dare say it won't be as difficult as I imagine. People respond to sensible management."

"Have you any talent?" asked Joanna, when Hope told her she was going on the stage.

Hope gazed at her wide-eyed. "Well, of course I imagine I have — or I should n't —"

"Yes, yes, I know that. I thought the same. I went so far as London — so far as to recite 'The quality of mercy is not strained' to a very influential person. I really believe he was almost an actor-manager — or thought he was going to be — or perhaps it was only I thought so —"

"And —?" asked Hope.

"The book just missed me — just missed me —" said Joanna, and she showed how nearly, with her finger and thumb together — "so!"

"What made you think you could act?"

"I just knew I could."

"But — you could n't?"

"Well, that was a matter of opinion — I thought one thing and the man who was nearly a manager thought another. You will find how blind they are as a race — My manager, of course, may not have been wrong."

Of course he was not, thought Hope. It was absurd of Joanna to have supposed she could act.

Hope was certain *she* could. Anyhow, she was frightfully bored and must do something — so why not that? Up and Down got on her nerves. The whole thing got on her nerves. The church bell began at six o'clock in the morning. John rang it. Not, he had said from the pulpit, when he first came to Up and Down, that he expected his people to come to church at that hour, but it might, he thought, be some consolation to those working in the fields to know their Vicar was not in bed. John suggested that before she began her work of setting Up and Down in order, Hope should go to London and stay with friends for a few days. The ways of managing country parishes were frequently discussed in London — and settled. Hope might learn how to set about her task. She went. And while she was there she dined out one night, and there sat on the one side of her a bishop: on the other, a man. So she classed them in her own mind, knowing nothing of bishops. To the man she spoke of Joanna: and by Joanna and her ways the man was quietly amused. He drew Hope out. She got so far as John on the grey ass, Joanna on the bicycle. She told her story well, and the Bishop, on the other side, being a man as well as a bishop, was attracted by the freshness of her appearance, the charm of her voice. Still more was he interested in John — more interested in John than the man was. Less interested than the man in the texture of Hope's skin; in the way her hair grew. The way in which his clergy

grew, in grace, was of far greater importance. He did not recognise John's mode of progression, but he was open to conviction. The people must be got at. He recognised that. It was a vital necessity, particularly at the moment when the Church was accused of apathy. (This gives no date.) — If they could be got at only by riding upon an ass, you must get at them that way — and in that manner.

"But why an ass?" he asked gently of Hope.

"Why an ass two thousand years ago?" The words were hurled across the table by a young woman. No one answered. The interruption was as unseemly as it was fierce. Lady Agnes would have said it did not go well with a 'mousse.'

Hope explained that the donkey was grey, Egyptian, and large.

The Bishop inclined his head: it was not reason enough. There were horses, grey too, and large.

"It was lent," said Hope.

"For the purpose?"

"Yes."

"Tell the story again — just as you told it to me — don't let the Church overpower you," said the man, leaning slightly forward to catch the Bishop's eye, and in it the glint of forgiveness. And Hope, to show she feared no man, least of all a bishop (even John might become one), threw back her head and told the story.

The morning she chose was a summer's morning. She described the lanes of Up and Down, densely

green in their summer foliage. Sunday morning in Up and Down! She placed a few boys, for ribaldry, on the village green, should she want them there at the passing of John. The first to emerge from the green lane, out on the dusty road, was John, on the grey donkey, with a parcel pillioned behind. She described John's expression as beautiful. Half shyly, half tenderly, she described it. He had a wonderful face — always — not only when he rode upon an ass.

She turned first to the man, then to the Bishop. The latter held out a hand waving her on.

"Then comes Joanna," she said.

"Does she, too, ride a donkey?" asked the Bishop.

"No, a bicycle — it's such a funny procession. They are too quaint, these adopted parents of mine."

"Adopted?" said the Bishop; "that explains it."

"Explains what?" asked Hope, knowing just what he meant.

"You," answered the Bishop. "I could not imagine you the child of such parents — nor could I imagine a child of such parents seeing only their funny side."

Poor Hope, she would have gone out and wept bitterly if she could: but if there is a time to weep it was not then.

"But I don't," she expostulated bravely; "I am sure even you would laugh if you saw them."

"Even I," said the Bishop. "Tell me, — but no, — I shall come and see for myself."

"Are they yours? I mean, are you their bishop?"

"I am their bishop — have lately become so."

"I think they are beautiful people," said the fervent girl from the other side of the table; "I have heard him — I hope you won't be prejudiced against him."

"Tell me some more," said the man on Hope's other side. Really he was the only one on her side — she felt that. The Bishop she knew was against her.

"Tell me," — but the fun had gone out of the story.

"Have I done them any harm?" she asked of the man anxiously.

"None, I should imagine. Every man must convey his message as he best can — don't you think so?"

Hope said, Of course, but it was difficult to live with people so quaint and not see their funny side. She had a sense of humour.

"A keen one, of course. We all have — if only people would recognise it. The fact of the matter is, there is not enough to go round — in older days it was left to divines, lawyers, essayists, and editors. Now we must all have our share and London is so greedy! It must be difficult for you. Would an almond sustain you?" And he pushed a dish of salted almonds towards her.

They could not comfort her. She was miserable. She had made fun of John and Joanna and it had

not been funny. And she had not described Joanna properly.

It would be difficult. There was the Joanna of dusty shoes and ill-fitting clothes. There was the Joanna, mother of the whole village. There was the Joanna whose whole world was her queer John. There was the Joanna — off to London for the day — a different Joanna that! With a light in her eyes, a spring in her walk — a singing in her heart — poetry possessing her. Every now and then she went to London. And she said not where she was going, but there were those who knew, and there were those who looked for her — and played for her — to her. She loved music. It was her passion. There were passages in Beethoven which she swore she loved better than she loved John — adding, "In a different way, of course." They drew her soul out of her, whereas it was her heart John held. In listening to music she became beautiful. She was in a world where shoes were not — and clothes of no account. Any one watching her listening to music — and there were those who did — forgot the dowdy little woman and saw only the woman with a world of wonderful things in her eyes, her lips — her whole face; in her hands even. She was transfigured. Yet, looking at her, they must have seen that here was suffering — that had once been sorrow and pain; and was now a memory. Under it all could be seen — by those who would see — joy, great joy, and over and above it all a tenderness, that

enveloped her — a tenderness of which she was a little ashamed — it was there, if they wanted it, but they must take it, not ask for it. If they asked for it she might be too shy to give it. Joanna, whose passion was music, was set down for life in Up and Down, where she struggled with the choir; tried her best to soften voices that were harsh, to instil into unmusical souls the spirit of melody. And so well did she succeed — not according to her own theories — that there were those, lodging in the village, who told her the choir was wonderfully good — for a village choir.

"They are good boys," admitted Joanna, "but—"

"But what, dear Mrs. Templar?" they said, seeking to encourage her. (Some people were too diffident and needed so much encouragement.)

"I wish — they would n't use pomatum."

The Bishop, true to his word, came to Up and Down. It was his bounden duty so to do. Joanna, forgetting how to feed a bishop, gave way to Martha, who said: "Feed him as you would feed a real man," meaning, perhaps, not as Joanna fed John.

Joanna prepared food for a man, or rather Martha did, and Hope wished there were more bishops about. This one gave her food and not only for thought. For different reasons, Joanna too may have wished she saw bishops oftener, because if this one came to criticise, he went away with no criticisms of John and Joanna in his heart. He gave Joanna sympathy and the donkey a carrot. Whether

it was the honour that killed it, or the carrot, or the English climate, none could say: but soon after the Bishop's visit the donkey died, and to Up and Down it was given to see the rare sight of a donkey dead. Who says the country is dull? Here, within a short space of time, were two excitements and in their ways quite different.

John no longer rode from village to village: but stayed in his Up and Down world, and those who let lodgings in the village could promise their lodgers two good sermons every Sunday. And they came to look upon their Vicar as one of the attractions they could most honestly offer. The weather they could not guarantee or their own cooking; both at times were bad — but Mr. Templar was never anything worse than a little hoarse.

Joanna never told what she and the Bishop talked about as they walked together in the garden: but they became, then and there, fast friends and at the end of their walk his hand was on her arm; and Hope was glad Joanna should have that excitement, transitory though it were, whose life was so quiet.

Joanna showed the Bishop the goats. They were, or had been, Milly's salvation. It is as well a bishop should know through what curious channels blessings may flow. Perhaps, like most divines, he had differentiated too strongly between the sheep and the goats. Here at last goats had done a good work. Joanna told the story of Milly: showed where the swallows had built, and from where the little ones

had flown. And when the story was done, the Bishop wiped his eyes — but not with his apron, as so many of Joanna's friends would have done in her Up and Down world.

XII

Hope decided that Joanna, newly blessed by the Bishop, must be in a receptive attitude of mind, so now was the time to begin work. She supposed Jomammy had mothers' meetings? Jomammy supposed she had.

But Hope said: "You must know. It is not a question of supposition — it is or it is not — a fact."

"It's a fact, then, a curious fact."

"Are they like other mothers' meetings?"

"Are any two mothers alike?"

"Most are alike," said Hope.

"Are they? Well, come to the meeting at three this afternoon, and see."

At half-past three, Hope, critical and interested (in the fact that she was interested), arrived at the Institute, where was held the mothers' meeting. She lifted the latch of the door and went in. Not one mother looked up. She had expected to prove at least a distraction, and a welcome distraction.

On a stool in the middle of the room sat Joanna — her hands clasped round her knees, her head thrown back, her eyes gazing up at the ceiling. She was lost in the story she was telling. So were the mothers — in that they are all alike — lost to the world, to Hope: in listening. One old woman sat

quite still, her worn hands folded in her lap. She smiled to see them lying like that — idle. It was not often they did. "Comical," she would have called it, if called upon to account for it by busier bodies than she.

One baby — a would-be disturber of the peace — was valiantly making the ascent of his mother's chest — the buttons of her dress helping wonderfully, affording a valuable purchase. She held him by one bare foot, vainly endeavouring to hold him down. He was battering her on the head. She was dodging, this way and that, catching him first by one hand, then by the other, so as not to miss a word of the story Mrs. Templar was telling. It was a fairy story. Hope was disturbed. She had known it would be an odd meeting. But she was drawn into the group of listeners. There was witchery in the telling of the story; there was beauty; there was imagination; there was poetry. But it was not in the least suitable for mothers, — village mothers, — Hope thought. She also thought that Joanna might almost have been a child, she looked so young as she sat there weaving a web of delicate imagining.

There were deep sighs when the story was finished, and the mother of the would-be disturber of the peace tossed him above her head, laughed at him, at his tricks; admired his prowess, apologised for having neglected him; saw in him the beauty of which Joanna had been speaking — only, thank

God, it was there to have and to hold and to touch. For the moment she had forgotten the drudgery of her everyday life — the unevenness of her kitchen floor. She held a prince in her arms, a kingdom in her heart.

"Now for the children," said Joanna. "Take this home to them. Every mother or grandmother here this afternoon must tell this to her children — or grandchildren — to-night," and she told the story of "The Three Bears."

Then Hope realised that no one had ever told the story of "The Three Bears" as Joanna told it, and she went out into the garden to wait — at that moment loving Joanna better than she had ever loved her — for she was all she could remember of her earliest childhood. Does a child — can a child — ever forget the teller of "The Three Bears" story — if the teller does her duty properly, both to the child and to the bears?

As the women walked out, one said to the other: "Deary me — I've got to tell that tale to-night — sakes alive! What was it she said?"

And Hope heard the mothers instructing one another in the art of story-telling. "You must change voices — mind," said one; "three changes there was — distinct changes."

"Does it do any good, Jomammy?" asked Hope, perplexed.

"They come," said Joanna.

"Ought n't they to sew?"

"They might."

"Why did n't you take the opportunity?"

"Because — they wash on Monday, iron on Tuesday, clean up on Wednesday — say they'll never get through on Thursday (children running in and out), bake on Friday, clean up on Saturday, cook on Sunday — wash on Monday and so on — squirrels in a cage. What they want is fun, Hope, and amusement — they want to see beauty and to learn to love it."

"And then they go back to their drab world?"

"And find there is after all beauty and colour — under it all — above it all —"

Hope was not quite sure it was well-bred to be as vehement as Joanna was. After all, they were only discussing an ordinary, everyday, parochial matter.

"What do you find so satisfying in the world?" she asked.

Joanna smiled.

"Well?" said Hope — insisting.

"There are daisies," said Joanna, — "there are puppies — there are mountains and mists — there are downhills when you bicycle — not many, but some; there are books, birds, and music — there is haymaking and harvesting — and the perfectly round croquet ball (unless you are one of a large family — then that is itself, perhaps, a blessing); there are other blessings, no doubt — there is Hope," — and out shot Joanna's hands and took Hope's.

Hope gently withdrew her hands and Joanna looked at the girl whose heart she had never won — her affection, perhaps, — but that was not enough. Joanna hungered for the Faith who must have been hers. Whereas Hope was far above her — unattainable. But Joanna, in her heart of hearts, knew that, if she had been asked, Would she be different? she would have said, "No, leave me as I am — with my own thoughts — my feelings — my love for everything — my untidiness, which more often than not is brought about by the rushing winds of heaven; my shoes generally squabbed by the good rain, muddied by the dear earth," for Joanna was a child of nature, just as Hope was a child of — whom? Hope had never asked. But she was essentially a child of London. The street noises were music to her ears. The hum of the traffic called to her. The lights at night excited her. She saw no sadness, no misery behind the gaily lighted streets. The sight of a woman in rags, a child in the gutter, moved her to nothing more than resentment — a mild resentment — that there should be anything ugly and untidy in the world where well-ordered citizens paid taxes and supported institutions that existed for the purposes of looking after the poor. A child in misery Joanna must have comforted; a woman in rags she must have clothed. In touching the woman she would not have thought at first of the woman's uncleanness; that would have come later and with it revulsion even, for Joanna loved cleanliness. To

her it was godliness itself in another form. But before it came charity; then next to charity came soap and water — so long as you kept the soap out of the children's eyes.

XIII

HOPE'S custom it was to make fun of Joanna and her clothes. Joanna took it all in good part: went so far as to offer Hope the pattern of a blouse. She said she had already given away two patterns of the same blouse — one to Lady Agnes, the other to the gardener's wife. Hope was not amused, because she was not sure whether Joanna really meant that she thought Lady Agnes wanted the pattern for herself. She must make sure.

"Did you think she wanted it for herself?" she asked.

"No," said Joanna, "for the gardener's wife, I expect."

"Then the gardener's wife will have two of the same."

"They are bound to be different," said Joanna hopefully.

"If a pattern is properly followed —" began Hope.

"But it won't be — If it is properly followed, it will fasten behind — if improperly followed, it will fasten in front, as I wear it."

"But, Jomammy, that's why you look so odd."

"No doubt," said Joanna, "but Daddy John can't fasten up as well as he used to do, and by the time he has got his glasses — well, I have done it

up in front. It does quite well. I am made that way. I am what might be called reversible. I am glad; I could never be dictated to by buttons."

Hope sighed. She felt that here was her mission in life. Not for her was marriage, a home of her own; but instead the ordering of this poor Up and Down world which was suffering under the maladministration of John and Joanna. They were kind, but so hopelessly incompetent. She must see what she could do in the way of educating the people: by elevating their minds, improving their conditions. It was no good sitting and listening to their troubles as Joanna sat and listened. No good singing sick babies to sleep. What must be done was to prevent babies getting sick. Prevention was better than cure. Joanna must have heard that hundreds of times, but she was deaf to all truth that was not a fairy tale. Hope was practical. If at the same time she happened to be beautiful (as she believed herself to be), it was very lucky, because, she thought, a beautiful woman trying to do good was infinitely more effectual — and effective — than a plain woman trying, who had no other field open to her. So beautiful Hope set to work. She started classes: knitting for girls, carving for boys. The girls must knit — not as their mothers before them had knitted — but in this manner. They must knit both socks at the same time — together. It could be done. It was only a question of getting a good pattern and following it. It was perfectly simple

and the result was delightful. The same amount of work and two socks done. No tedium: no wasting of brain tissues, by an effort to do things alike that were entirely separate propositions. How could any one of temperament knit two days alike — two socks alike? While the first sock was knitting, the world might be at peace: the second sock, the whole of Europe at war. Under conditions so diverse, knitting must be different.

The children sat before Hope, gazing at her, their mouths open, their eyes wide. They swallowed, in their inability to understand what she meant. She looked very charming, standing before them with her hands clasped behind her back, swaying gracefully as she talked. "Don't you see that, girls? Don't you like the idea?"

The girls did n't say. First of all none of them knew what wasted tissue was except Nellie, whose sister, a lady's-maid, had spoilt a silver tissue dress in cutting it out. Nellie was n't going to be a maid — not she — no tissue for her. Then there was temperament, it had to do with drink — that they knew.

"Well, girls, I shall get the pattern and every Tuesday at six o'clock you shall come and you shall knit socks for your fathers — well, Kitty?"

The red-faced little girl addressed got redder still and whispered hoarsely that she had no father.

"Well, brother, then," said Hope gaily — it was so easy to supplement the loss —

"Ain't got no brother — he died."

"Well, cousin."

Kitty shook her head. She had a tortoise, and that — even — was lost.

"Well, well," said Hope, "we shall see."

She got the pattern. To do her justice she tried to master it herself before she started teaching. She knitted and knitted, according to the instructions, and when the socks were nearly finished they were not two, but one, firmly attached one to the other — closer knit than the best of friends. Joanna undid them and started Hope in the right way. And the girls came and they knitted as their mothers before them had knitted. The boys' carving class was not a success. They carved their fingers and blunted their tools. They annoyed Hope. They were impossible. Joanna came to the rescue. She started modelling instead of carving. It had the advantage of quietness. John could sleep through it! — even in the same room. One boy modelled a squirrel. Joanna painted it for him. The boy went home with it on his arm and his grandfather offered it a nut, which Joanna vowed was a tribute as valuable as that paid to Zeuxis. Hope thought Joanna exaggerated, but Up and Down was in a state of mental excitement; not that it knew who Zeuxis was exactly! But it reflected Joanna's mood — and listened not to Hope when she said the grandfather was nearly blind.

The boy must now model a face — Joanna's?

She was the only one who had time to sit. Joanna vowed the head, when finished, was excellent! — but she had not realised how like a squirrel she was. Hope was impatient. Of course, the boy had modelled the squirrel quite well, but it was a fluke. He could not do Joanna.

"But he has!" she said; "has n't he, John?"

And John admitted he had never realised before how like a squirrel Joanna was. And Hope, exasperated, went up to the Park to tell Lady Agnes all about it. Lady Agnes was delighted with the squirrel story. Had the old man really offered the modelled squirrel a nut? Then it must have been excellently well done. Had any one offered the model of Joanna a nut? If not, it must have been more like Joanna than it was like a squirrel.

Hope found herself a great social success. She sat with the rest of the people under the trees on the lawn and was urged to tell some 'Joanna' stories. She told them. One man of the party (a man she would have been pleased to please) listened gravely. He did not even smile when the others laughed, and Hope would rather have made him smile than she would have made the others laugh. She wished she had not told the stories. So she stopped.

"That's all," she said, "and really — she's a dear!"

The grave man leaned forward in his chair and looked at Hope. "I should be proud to meet her. Is she to be met?" he asked.

Hope said she was, constantly and easily.

"Then — may I meet her?"

And Hope said: "Of course."

"When? May I walk back with you?"

And Hope said "Yes." She was strangely elated: excited even. She was curiously attracted by this quiet, grave man. If he had taken more notice of her she might have found him less attractive: but she was piqued by the impersonal manner in which he spoke to her. It was entirely of Joanna he thought. So Hope imagined. She was wrong. He thought mostly of Joanna, it was true, and a little of Hope and that little was: How wasted such a woman must be on such a girl! He lit a cigarette, blew out the match, drove it point downwards into the lawn, put his foot on it, and Hope rose to go.

"I don't believe you know each other's names," said Lady Agnes. "Miss Templar, Captain Blunt."

"I know your name, of course," said Hope, as they walked away.

At that moment everybody knew his name. He had just brought to a successful conclusion an expedition in Africa. If he had chosen to roar he might have found himself a lion. Lady Agnes had done all she could to make him. She went so far as to say he roared when no one was there — roared for her alone — but no one believed her.

"But your photograph was not like you," said Hope, glancing quickly at his profile.

"It probably was n't mine. My photograph and

another man's were apparently mixed up. I was married and the other man was —"

"Expeditionised?" said Hope.

"Yes."

"He got the best of it," said Hope.

"And you, a woman, say that?" The girl, by the way, looked very charming. "Perhaps when a man is alone in the wilds he gets an exaggerated idea of the happiness of a home life. It is, at all events, a pleasant dream — one never dreams as one dreams beside a camp-fire."

The last thing Hope would have done was to belittle the beauty of home life. She had been very unlucky. Across the Park they walked. Hope, longing to say something sympathetic about that home of his dreams: he, thinking that she walked well — better than she talked. Most Englishwomen talked better than they walked. This girl was an exception in that and in nothing else. She was nice to look at — healthy, but not interesting.

At last she said, "It's very hot."

And he agreed it was.

"But it's not what you call hot — probably," she ventured.

He said he had been hotter — much.

She relapsed into silence, wondering what kind of a woman she was whom he pictured in his dream home. What kind of woman did he admire? How would he talk and of what, to her? Was he engaged?

"Are black women pretty?" she asked in desperation.

"They are graceful when they are very young."

"What do you call young?" she asked, feeling her youth triumphant. No one could dispute her possession of that attraction.

"Out there? A girl is a woman at fourteen."

"Oh, quite young," she said, feeling so old — robbed of her youth. It was getting worse and worse. She was getting hot. She wondered what he was thinking about? Not of a dream home with her. He was thinking it was good to be in England again. He was admiring the country, not the girl at his side. She was just a part of England. She made England what she was, just as England made her what she was. The pink cheeks which caused the girl suffering were to him the softest and best expression of the English climate.

From the Park they came out into the lane. They walked down the lane, Hope snatching at grasses as she passed; brambles catching at her skirt. Still her companion did n't speak, so she made up her mind to say something before she reached a particular tree. Thousands of trees have been singled out for the same purpose by thousands of tongue-tied girls. They have all been passed — in their thousands — as Hope passed this one — in silence. Many more trees have been used as a last refuge in conversation than were ever used by Charles II to hide in. In silence Hope and her companion

reached the village. "There's the church," she said. She looked upon it almost as a sanctuary. Once within its walls she would not be expected to speak — John exacted a profound silence.

"Would you like to see it?" she asked. "There's nothing to see."

He said he should, and through the churchyard they walked. Around a grave — or so he supposed — a crowd was gathered together. He hesitated, sensitive to the expression of a sorrow he could not help. He suggested they should turn back.

"It's only Jomammy," said Hope, "telling fairy stories — or reading Shakespeare. She's too funny. She treats the people exactly as if they were —"

"Human beings?"

"Well, they might be human," said Hope, nettled, "without being intelligent."

"Just as they might be intelligent without being human — don't disturb her —" This quickly, because Hope seemed about to break in, scattering Joanna's audience.

Paul Blunt sat down at a short distance and saw for the first time Joanna Templar, and saw her at her best.

She sat on a wide, flat stone. Around her were grouped young men and young women, old men and old women and children — all listening. She was leaning forward, with her small brown hands grasping her knees as was their habit. Her eyes were alight with enthusiasm; her whole face elo-

quent; her voice beautiful — soft — low — far-carrying — distinct. Her enunciation was pure; the timbre of her voice was like a beautiful instrument in its quality. She was reciting a Shakespeare play. For each character her voice was different. Scenery there was none, yet none was needed. Properties were not, yet none were missed. She rose. She remained standing very quietly, hardly moving her arms. The swallows dipped and skimmed over the heads of the listening people. Perhaps the words she used were above the heads of the people too, but they listened to the sound of the words, just as they watched the flight of the swallows — recognising in both beauty above their understanding.

Behind Joanna was the gorgeous setting of the sun. Against the background of molten clouds she stood out — a small dark figure — her face obliterated. The blast of the herald's trumpets was heard. The sky shook with the colour of their triumphant sounding. Far finer than any stage heralds — these!

It was a scene Paul Blunt was never to forget. Beside him was Hope, wondering what he thought of it all. Not sure whether to be ashamed of Joanna or a little proud.

"Most amazing," he said, and straightway Hope was a little proud and felt a rush of affection for Joanna. She had proved herself the right kind of impossible person — an asset.

"Now," she said, and they got up and together

went towards Joanna. "Jomammy, this is Captain Blunt."

In a few moments Hope left them, and when she went neither of them knew she had gone. So, although Mark Twain says — and most truly — that 'it is better to be a young June bug than an old bird of paradise' — and Ecclesiasticus before him said the same thing differently — Hope felt youth a drug in the market of Up and Down and she determined to go to London, where youth triumphs — both in the streets and in the market-places.

XIV

FROM London Hope wrote fervent letters to Joanna, and Joanna sent her in return hampers of green vegetables. Cooling vegetables — she called them. Hope wrote that she was working desperately hard and loved it all. She had always known she could act, that she had it in her. Joanna knew exactly what Hope had in her and it was not the spirit of acting. But every one must learn for herself her own parts and play them too. Hope lived with her friend who had influence. The name of the friend was Chandler, Maud Chandler; the name of the influence, Willing Manners, a young man, five foot ten or thereabouts, with a burning enthusiasm for everything that — according to him — did not exist — great actors, great actresses, real artists, honest politicians, profound philosophers, sincere clergymen. He would have admired successful actors if he could honestly have done it. He wanted to sit at the feet of a master. But the actors he knew had not even a leg to stand upon, let alone feet at which to sit. He ruffled his hair as he said this and looked very intense and very untidy. Hope knew she was face to face with the real thing. But she also knew it was the right thing to show little interest and no surprise. Seeing her unmoved, Manners smoothed his hair, rearranged his tie, and

swore by all the gods that he wanted to admire actors. If they had been the real thing, he must have admired them: so readily did the spark of his appreciation leap into a flame of admiration when it was kindled by the divine fire. He was tinder to the spark of genius.

Hope thawed before the fire of his enthusiasm — and before the evening was out she had admitted — in confidence — that she liked potted meat immensely, and ostrich feathers — curled, not straight. That much he got out of her — it was something — some definite expression of a purposeless mind.

If Manners found Hope disappointing, Hope did not like Manners. She decided he was odd, and odd in a different way from Daddy John. In her eyes Daddy John's oddness was bad enough, but there was something lovable about it. In Manners's oddness there was nothing but cheap weirdness. Then in a moment of inspiration he told her she looked unusual; and Hope was gratified. She had always supposed if she looked anything it was usual. She had feared it every time she had looked at herself in a glass. She was beautiful, she knew, but unfortunately, there was nothing distinctive in the way her hair grew; no sweep of eyebrow to inspire a poet; no tilt of nose to fascinate; no curve of lip to delight. So how was she unusual? She asked him and he told her — just because she was so ordinary. Most people were distinctive; if not naturally so, they made themselves so. In leaving herself as she was

made she had attained distinction. She was the perfectly, purely simple woman as God had made her. It should have been praise enough, but it was curiously unsatisfying. She would have been more. Yet this man was satisfied. He promised her a future if she would leave herself in his hands. On the stage there must be dozens of characters she could impersonate. The simple country girl — no make-up should be necessary. If she could be herself, she must triumph; in her own particular rôle.

However ordinary Hope might be, she felt herself hurled, with a vengeance, into the burning fiery furnace of the artistic world. Of great actors there were none, but just this one young man who walked unsinged through the fire of burning criticism.

Among great actresses — of course there were none — she alone would count, would live — if she remained as she was — unusually ordinary. Up and Down should hear her name and tremble. No! 'tremble' was not quite the word she wanted. She herself was trembling; but that was from excitement — and she shivered rather than trembled. She was beginning to be an expert in the analysing of her feelings. It was unfortunate that this young man, so eager to fall down and worship at the feet of genius, should not find genius, though he sought it all London over. He had not been to Paris, he explained — with a fitting gesticulation!

In the mean time he found Maud Chandler's patronage useful: her cook's cooking not too taste-

less (there again he had not been to Paris — and there was potted meat) and her flat comfortable. He obeyed her injunction to smoke everywhere, and he smoked everywhere, even into Hope's face, and she found it difficult to court Influence. But she was up against Joanna, as it were. She must succeed. As she was Joanna's critical audience, so was Joanna hers. They both felt that. They played to fail or succeed in the eyes of each other. Hope worked hard, or thought she worked hard, and the Influence encouraged her — discouraged her — and disheartened her, as the mood possessed him. He admired her as a type of the cold, self-contained English girl; one he would n't marry for the world — so he argued with himself. For four hundred a year he might. The difficulty was to find out if that comfortable pittance was hers to have and to withhold. On that subject Maud was curiously reticent, and on that subject alone. On every other she spoke openly to her friend, telling him constantly that she kept nothing from him; quite unconscious of the fact that it was reticence he thought he admired: elusiveness he imagined he adored. Maud was mistress of neither. If she had kept anything from him, that thing above all others he must have known. She had no idea of Hope's position with regard to money. Her board was paid for regularly by Mr. Templar, who was generous in money matters; and Maud found being kind to Hope a paying thing. It also brought Willing Manners to the flat con-

stantly, so she was well content. Hope was too unemotional to be a serious rival. Willing could never tolerate cold criticism. The cold criticism — whether he liked it or not — spurred him on to prove himself of real importance in the theatrical world. He must show her he could perform — even a miracle, if he willed it — and he introduced her to an actor-manager who, for some reason, known neither to his stage-manager nor to Willing, nor to any weekly illustrated newspaper, promised her a small part in a play he was producing — some time — he was n't sure when. He did n't go so far as to engage her definitely — but it was an understood thing she could study the part. After it was thoroughly understood, Willing dined at Maud's flat still oftener, and was very persistently Hope's patron. At odd times he was also an author. Hope must be nothing to him, he told her, if she could not be 'copy.' All women were to him that before anything else. Here to his very hand was a new type of woman. A woman, calm, unmoved, placid, pledged to potted meat, conventional. What would such a woman be, roused to fury? A tigress? He wondered. Here was the chance to find out. He decided to elope with her; just so far as Kingston, no farther. Not a yard: but that she should not know. There must be no geographical limit to her righteous indignation. It was quite easily arranged. She understood from the first — not from Maud — that, in her position, it was quite right and proper that she should go to

the play with a young man — a young man of Manners's most excellent behaviour. So he asked her to go to a play and she accepted. Pit it must be, pit or nothing. What play? Where? Was it a good play? He would arrange all that. And Hope in her heart of hearts believed, not only that he could arrange all that, but that, if he chose, he could write a good play for the occasion. They went to the play. Hope could hardly have imagined a play more perfect. With eyes burning with excitement she turned now and then to Manners to find him invariably plunged in melancholy, with the 'Has England come to this?' sort of look on his face, which made Hope ashamed of enjoying herself. But she was enjoying herself — would have done so still more if she had been in the stalls: but she felt that was a snobbish thing to think. Throughout the performance Manners remained melancholy. At the end of it, with a curious determination he helped her on with her coat, bustled her out into the street, and hurried her into a taxi. This was an unlooked-for extravagance. She was glad she had brought her purse. She must pay half. Where were they going? At a tremendous pace they went through streets unknown to her; cut corners, skidded — narrowly escaping collisions. She repeated, "Where are we going?" and Manners, throwing all restraint to the winds, laughed — and laughed again. That was how Hope would have described it — how Manners himself was going to describe it in his story. In the very act he should be

depicted on the paper wrapper of the book. The story had grown to book size — one shilling net — coloured wrapper: —

"Mr. Manners, where *are* we going?" Hope asked again. She was perfectly calm and unruffled. As copy, so poor as to be useless.

"It's what you want — what you need," he said vehemently.

"What?" asked Hope, longing to know what it was she wanted.

"A strong hand — it's no use struggling — I've got you. You are at the mercy of a man — an enormous man — a powerful — determined — obstinate — offensive — defensive — primitive — primordial — man —"

"I shall never forgive you," said Hope — weakly.

"Forgiveness — is not what I ask — it is yourself, your body, your soul — your life — Speak!"

Hope said nothing.

"Speak, woman — speak!"

"Oh, Mr. Jones!" said Hope. "I'm afraid that's no good, is it?" She was really anxious to rise to the occasion.

"Good for what? Good for nothing?"

"For your story, I mean," said Hope. "It's no use, I can't do it — Maud warned me that you would want me to do it."

"Do it!" said Manners in desperation. "Have you no spirit? Is that how you would behave to a man who runs away with you?"

"I don't know what I should do: where are we now?"

"Near Kingston. My mother expects us. Shall we go and have — potted meat — or go home?"

Hope said she liked potted meat — how clever of him to remember. So they went. And at the door of a small house waited a small woman — gentle and old and young and rather delightful, with a twinkle in her eye and a kindly scolding for her ridiculous boy — in her smile.

"You are late, dear," she said. And she drew Hope into a narrow hall and from there led her into the sitting-room where an absurd supper was laid. "Did you know, my dear, before you started?"

Hope said she had known.

"I have been copy for so many years, I am ready to give up my part. Willing has broken deaths, births, and marriages to me at the most unexpected moments. He has told me of immense fortunes to which I have succeeded — crimes of which I have been suspected — children I have borne and forgotten and forsaken. I wonder if any one realises what it means to those who belong to writers who lack imagination? Come, dear, to supper. The taxi-driver is married to my cook — it all keeps us amused and expectant. Were you angry?"

Hope said she was afraid she was n't; not in the least.

"You see, mother," said Manners, "I wanted a calm, collected, self-contained woman to be roused.

I wanted to get the real thing. You were no good — for obvious reasons — even if I had found some one to run away with you."

"Past the age, dear."

"Well, yes, partly that — and I thought that Miss Templar would be the very thing — Maud spoilt it all."

"Maud perhaps had reasons for doing so."

"Maud has no right to reasons."

Hope looked from Willing to his mother, and back again to Willing. How had he managed to have a mother so delicious, so adorable? That she was devoted to him was quite evident. She smiled at him with her eyes. He amused her, that was quite certain. And she was prepared to be fond of Hope for her son's sake. "There is nothing in it," Hope felt bound to whisper; and the mother said: "There never is — copy — that's all. But if ever you feel you would care to come again, I should be delighted to see you — you *will?*" And Hope said she would.

The drive back to London was almost too short for all Manners had to say of his mother. It was for her sake largely he had to write these absurd stories — not only because she read them, but because he gave her the money he made by them. "I have not the smallest atom of imagination. I could no more imagine what you would do when you were being run away with than the man in the moon could. There were two openings for you, I should have said: Prayer (having lived with a parson) and Song.

You might have sung to me until we reached our destination, by which time my heart would, of course, have been softened. Now, tell me, but for Maud's interference — which would you have done? I must know. It's four thousand words by Tuesday."

"Neither," said Hope; "I should have opened the door and jumped out."

"Now, would you? That is the question. That is, undoubtedly, what I — without imagination — should have made you do. You would have been on the cover, doing that very thing — in a yellow frock, and red stockings — But *would* you? Remember, there's the colour of your hair to consider — not a particle of red in it — your profile. You must take these things into consideration. My aim is to provide truth — exciting truth — for the masses. I want them to realise that what one woman does, under given circumstances, another will not do under the same circumstances. I want them to be able to discard what is untrue to life — to say, on sight as it were, 'A woman with a mouth like that would never have done so-and-so.' I want street urchins, with noses pressed against shop-windows, to recognise truth and untruth. 'Garn, wot-cher mean; look at 'er 'air, she's no bloomin' idiot — wot does 'e tike 'er for?' That quick perception of truth would afford scope, opportunity, and a living to the real artist. Now, of course, you have thrown me into a state of doubt and depression. You say you would have opened the door and jumped out

of the taxi — I say you would n't — at least, if you are true to type you would n't. You may be abnormal — no doubt you are."

Hope had doubts of her own. There was her part. How was she going to play it? The accent? How should she acquire it? How could she look untidy through the whole of a long act? During the second she was to acquire grace: in the third, dignity: in the last, a rich husband. "I wish it had been a tidy part all through," she said.

"Your whole life has been too tidy," protested Manners. "You have rules and regulations hanging on to every button of your personality."

Hope, who had learned to put up with a good deal, resented this. She was tidy, gloried in it, but Joanna had reduced the art of untidiness to a science. She did it far better, far more effectively than Willing — with less effort. "My adopted mother is the untidiest person I ever saw," she said.

"Ah, *adopted*, yes, she might be — must be — is bound to be — Your tidiness would drive her to it. It is the most exasperating form of tidiness I have ever met — both mentally and bodily. Good-night — you give me at least this — for copy: the good-night of a cold, calculating, conventional woman. Good-night!"

Hope turned as she got out of the taxi to say good-night to the driver, and beside him — although a taxi is not made to carry two in front — sat the cook

— she supposed it must be the cook, wearing a toque trimmed with fuchsias. Impossible people —

"You 're awfully late," said Maud, who was peeping out of her bedroom door. "I don't know now if you 're up early or late to bed — Where have you been?"

"I don't really know — the picture on the cover is just a woman jumping out of a cab — I 'm so sleepy!"

"Hope, was it copy? Truthfully, was it?"

"Truthfully."

"Oh, darling, I am so relieved — were you a help to him? I am afraid you could n't be vulgar, could you? — or even arresting. Is n't he an extraordinary person?"

"Impossible!"

"He does it for such good motives — He had once to write a story of a woman who was engaged to be married to a plumber — poor Willing! And it was suggested to him — by a picture cover — that it must be broken to the woman that the man was already married. Of course he did n't know what a woman would do under those conditions, so he came and told my poor Emma, who was engaged to a turn-cock, that the turn-cock was already married. Willing brought smelling-salts with him, which did n't come into the picture at all — and Zoo tickets to make up — and he spoilt the whole thing. Emma did n't faint or anything: she said, 'I had my doubts,' and went to the Zoo with a parlour-maid

— sister to a policeman. You see, it is awfully difficult for Willing because he is so sincere."

Hope said she was sleepy and wished Maud good-night.

"Editors don't understand him one bit, Hope; they don't appreciate the immense trouble he takes. I have been copy over and over again. And he always says I am not true to nature."

"Has he ever seen you as you look now — for copy, you would let him? Impossible — impossible," murmured Hope, and in a very few minutes she was asleep; and for a young woman who had been run away with, she slept extraordinarily soundly — which could not have been true to nature.

Maud lay awake, thankful she had warned Hope. Supposing she had thought Willing meant it. He would some day marry — for copy — have children — for copy — and die — for copy. Maud knew he would.

The next day Hope was to rehearse her part. Willing Manners went to bed in his chair, lit a cigarette, threw the match on to the floor, and with a wave of his hand commanded a performance.

Maud sat at his feet, lit a cigarette from his, picked up his match, and threw it into the empty grate.

"How untidy you are!" said Hope, and she swept the match out of sight — with the hearth-broom which was her birthday present to Maud. Maud could truthfully have said she had n't exactly prayed for a hearth-brush. As Hope leant forward to brush

the hearth, Willing Manners found her attitude beautiful. He begged her to stay just as she was.

"How long?" asked Hope — she had good reason to ask. While she was perfectly willing to stay looking beautiful for five minutes, it was obviously impossible to stay looking beautiful for two hours, in the same position — if she was to rehearse her part.

She turned to ask the question, and in asking it changed her position.

"Ah, you have spoilt it all. Read your part if you don't know it. Go on!"

Hope said she could n't read it, or play it. He said he knew that; she must try. With a wave of his cigarette he urged her on. She went on and, badly enough she went, to the bitter end. Then she waited. It was possible she had succeeded: the true artist might have triumphed over the trembling novice. Under it all Manners might have detected — genius — the temperament, at least, of a genius.

He was sunk deep in his chair, plunged in melancholy meditation. Hope knew she had failed.

"You are no more an East End flower-girl," he said, sadly pulling up his sock, "than you are a — well, anything you like — a Havana cigar. Here, give me the thing."

He took the manuscript from her hand, snatched a cushion from the sofa for flower-basket, and he was a flower-girl — rather more of a flower-girl than he need have been; but he was one — without doubt — concentrated essence of flower-girl. Hope could

see the glittering of gold ear-rings — the tawdriness of feathered hat — the flowers in the basket — faded.

"It's very wonderful," she said, "but you are drunk."

"And why not — if I choose? I'm cold — I'm thirsty — I have n't sold a bloomin' flower —"

"I could never be that sort of flower-girl," she said icily. "I am sure there are very nice flower-girls — respectable."

And a very nice respectable flower-girl she studied to be. She wrote great accounts of her accent to Joanna. It was extraordinary how easily it came to her. She hoped it would n't stick to her — the accent — Joanna must correct her if it did — then Hope added: "I suppose it does not mean that I come from that class. Jomammy, who am I? I have often tried to ask. I want to know now — please tell me by return — I am not quite sure that I ought to go on the stage and take a living from some one else — I mean some one who must work —"

Joanna received Hope's letter and, having read it, put it in her pocket. She was going to see Mrs. Don to tell her how well Milly was getting on.

XV

Mrs. Don was a nice enough woman: but had nothing of the grace that one would have looked for to explain the grace that was Milly's heritage. But heredity is not ruled by fixed laws. The plainest parents have beautiful children: the most beautiful, plain children. And the beautiful parents think their children beautiful and the beautiful children think their plain parents beautiful — or may — and there is beauty in everything and everywhere, to those who see it and are not really looking for it.

So Joanna thought nothing of it when Mrs. Don — looking less like Milly than any one she had ever seen — opened the door.

Joanna said she had come with news of Milly. Mrs. Don twisted her apron round her arms and gave herself up to Mrs. Templar: her attitude saying as plainly as possible: "Go on, I'm listening."

"You must be proud of her," said Joanna at the end of her story.

"She's a good girl," said Mrs. Don; "I've no fault to find with her."

"Mothers don't mind faults, do they," said Joanna. "They are the people who can best afford to find them."

"They're their own over again as a rule," said

Mrs. Don. "It's funny how children favour their parents."

"Funnier still how they don't," said Joanna, without intention, thinking only of the absurdity of the china lamb on the mantelpiece.

Mrs. Don shot a look at Joanna out of the corners of her eyes — a look that was not lost upon Joanna, and for some curious reason a doubt of Milly's parentage flashed across her mind. It was perhaps more curious that it had not done so before.

"Tell me," she said impulsively.

Mrs. Don sat down on the other side of the fireplace — got up again to put the kettle on the hob and to arrange the fire.

"Marking time," thought Joanna, feeling for Hope's letter which lay like something alive in her pocket. Hope asking who were her parents. Joanna asking who were Milly's!

Mrs. Don sat down again — and put her apron over her head. She was crying. When she had shown outward signs of what she was inwardly feeling — nothing is so expressive as an apron — she lowered her arms, dried her tears with her apron — smoothed it out, and said it had to come.

"I should ha' thought you'd have seen it. Many a time I've looked out of the winder and looked at her walkin' away — or comin' towards me — just the same either way — and said to myself — no child of mine could ever ha' walked like that — dancin' it was more than walkin'. Then the ways

of her — pretty ways — pretty they always were, but distant, so to speak. She never seemed near to me like my own — not that she was n't a good girl, because she was — except for that once, and then I'm not sayin' she meant it. She was always wantin' beauty — she was. She would n't listen when I told her it did n't come into our lives — so to speak. She behaved as if the moon belonged to her — she did. I never knew such a child for wantin' things that God keeps to Himself — cryin' for the rainbow, she was — wantin' to dress up in it. I told her times it was out of her reach. I never could read to her about Heaven bein' all gold and jewels but she wanted to go there — which was n't natural — my children would be scared to walk on gold. Then her hair, you could n't do anything with it. It sprang out — on winter nights mostly — like showers of sparks — my father was a blacksmith. She did kind little things when you were ill and she would sing and dance. Many a time I've been upstairs to see what it was all about and it was Milly dancin' in the moonlight mostly. If she'd been my own I should ha' been more scared."

"Whose was she?" asked Joanna, thinking of the other child whose parents were by curious chance of choice herself and John: Milly's, by a chance more curious perhaps, Mr. and Mrs. Don.

"She was a love child," said Mrs. Don.

"Whose — do you know?"

Mrs. Don shook her head. "It seemed all right

at first — and there seemed to be money in it — and we took her — but the young mother died, it seemed, and we never heard more — nor troubled to, perhaps, — We left where we lived and came here — to live."

"And you kept her for nothing?" asked Joanna.

"We kep' her for love," said Mrs. Don fiercely; "but all the time I felt we were n't doing right by the child. I 'm obliged to you, I 'm sure, ma'am, for givin' her the charnst — she 's a child you can't help lovin' — not that I feel natural with her — I doubt you ever would with her eyes lookin' at you as they do — askin' questions all the time — there 's something diff'rent about a love child — I always say."

"A passion flower," said Joanna softly. "They need more careful tending than any flower, perhaps."

"Umph," said Mrs. Don, "when I first went out to service they had one in the conservatory, it seemed hardy enough — a passion flower? Well, it 's one way out of it. But a pretty name don't save a child when all 's said and done."

Joanna had much to think about. Milly's parentage?

A thousand things came to her mind now. Things that had puzzled her about the child — her receptiveness — her adaptability — her quickness. She was certainly no child of Mrs. Don; and suddenly Joanna felt an immense tenderness for Mrs. Don whose child had been taken from her. Although she had always known she was not hers, there must

have been nights when the restless child in her arms must have seemed very near, perhaps nearer than any of her own because it was not hers and motherless. For what Mrs. Don had given naturally to her own children because they were hers, she had given willingly to Milly. And Milly had responded as Hope had never done. Joanna had never found her critical of Mrs. Don.

Joanna went home to write to Hope. Before writing she went to John, and laying her hand on his shoulder said, "What is the Blents' number?"

And John knew.

"Thirteen," he said. "She wants to know?"

"Yes, she wants to know. We must not keep her if she wishes to go."

There was a pause; then John said: "She will find Mrs. Blent very unlike you."

Joanna said nothing. There was nothing to say about Hope, except that she was tired of trying to be an actress and must look elsewhere for adventure. About Milly she said, "Milly is not the Dons' child."

"No? Well, that explains much — the child's manner — her walk, her happy — "

"Then you did look at her?"

"Yes, I looked. It was your suggestion I should. I was glad I looked — it is something to think of — on dark winter days — I mean, she was very like — spring sunshine — was n't she?"

Joanna enthusiastically admitted it — finding it curious that on the day they were losing Hope

they should talk and think of Milly. Not entirely: Hope tugged at Joanna's heart. She had loved her as a baby; a little girl. Hope had followed closely on the heels of Faith. Faith was gone: now Hope was going, and of the two Faith would be the nearer, for she was still Joanna's.

Joanna wrote Hope a letter Faith could never have asked her to write: —

My Child,—I shall still call you that, for what you have been to us and may be again some day. You are quite right to go to your father and mother, because to them you must always belong. I often felt it: knew it, but was waiting for them to say so. The silence on my part you will forgive because — young as you are — you must know that a child's arms round one's neck are chains one does not willingly break — or easily. We were happy captives, Daddy John and I, and remember, if ever your impossible John and Joanna can help you in any way, you have only to put out those arms. Good-bye, Hope.

Your loving JOMAMMY.

P.S. The goats are well. The name of your father and mother is Blent.

Joanna added the address.

Hope set out to find out all she could about the Blents. She liked their address. It was a relief to her to find it so good and so 'near everything.' She found it no difficult task to find out about the Blents. Mr. Blent's name headed many a subscription list and Mrs. Blent opened bazaars, not infrequently. Not the best kind of bazaars, Hope thought, but ba-

zaars. It was given to Hope the power to differentiate between the kinds. She found that Manners knew all about the Blents. They went to matinées. He felt bound to break that to her. Perhaps she would not mind. It was no serious charge to make against them, but there were men who would not go to matinées — well, Mr. Blent was not one of those men —

"Anything else?" asked Hope, — "against them, I mean?"

Manners knew nothing. He had a vague feeling that the most that could be said of them, and for them, was that they were rich — just rich — nothing more, nothing less.

Hope felt that she could bear that, and she wrote to her new father and mother. After she had posted the letter she met a woman who knew them really well. From her again Hope learned that they were rich — very rich. When she asked for more definite information she was again told they were rich — very rich.

"And very nice?" she asked, knowing they must be, she had always felt it.

She was again told they were very rich — and oh, nice? Of course, very nice.

Had 'nice' been quite the word Hope had meant to use? Would 'nice' describe the parents she would choose? In niceness, of course, lay safety. In no possible way could she describe John and Joanna as nice. They were infinitely more than that and pos-

sibly much less. Hope sought conventionality and a certain propriety in everyday life. She wanted to have parents like the parents of other people. The answer to her letter promised her a complete realisation of her hopes. It was a letter hundreds of parents might have written and few do. It was conventional: but it expressed a dignified, well-ordered pleasure at the prospect of meeting their dear daughter whom Fate had taken from them, and was now restoring.

"I'm not sure of that," thought Hope as she folded the letter. She hardly knew it, but it all depended on what the house was like: or how rich they really were — her parents. People were accustomed to exaggerate riches; she had lived long enough to know that.

She was not going to give up John and Joanna unless — well, it must be for something very worth while — besides, it would be ungrateful, they had really been dears. Hope had discovered herself to be no actress. She was a better actress than she knew.

XVI

We remember — when we could not distinguish faces and features — forms, looming large in the candlelit darkness, that bent over our cots — gentle hands that rearranged the bedclothes, our arms and legs even, that smoothed out hair, tenderly disentangling it from buttons and brooches — voices that sang to us softly. All these things we remember before we realised that summed up they meant fathers and mothers (some fathers tuck up and some don't, but mothers always do). So the scents of roses and violets remain with us, sweet memories.

To have parents suddenly appearing in your life — elderly, who had never tucked you up; had never disposed, as they would, of your wayward arms and legs — must be an experience sufficiently startling to upset any one; and it was a bewildered Hope — an apprehensive Hope, too, who made her way to the home of her new and real father.

Nothing now seemed so real as John and Joanna. No home so truly hers as the vicarage at Up and Down, nestling in the trees that divide it from the church. On a hot summer's day Hope remembered she could walk from the house to the church under the shade of the trees, right into the church porch. She had often arrived perfectly cool when every one else had looked hot — she was hot now. Her cheeks

blazed; her heart thumped. Anything so bewildering as this experience had never come into her life. She had longed for adventure. Now that it had her by the throat she was frightened.

The cab stopped at a house in a square — a tall house with a portico — like hundreds of other houses — its pillars whiter than most, newly painted.

The bell she rang was like hundreds of other bells — louder, of course; much louder — louder than any bell outside of dreams and nightmares. It slipped from her hand as she pulled it and it seemed as if it would never stop ringing. Before it had stopped, the door was thrown open by a footman — behind him stood a butler. Her heart ceased to thump. This was the home-coming of which she had dreamed. Her father was not there: nor was her mother — there was no dog; otherwise it promised to come up to the home-coming of her dreams. The butler did not ask her name. It was known, then, she was coming. The news of her coming must have caused a great excitement. She wondered how it had been accounted for — her sudden appearance?

She followed the butler upstairs. He opened the drawing-room door and announced — Miss Blent. That she had not expected — preferring Templar. She was giddy with confusion — she thought her petticoat must be coming down — something awful must be happening — her head swam — her soul melted within her.

Two forms — both large — came towards her.

One was her father, the other her mother. So she supposed, unless she might, perhaps, have got into the wrong house. But there was not left even that hope, the butler had expected her. She was drawn down on to the sofa by the smaller and the rounder of the two forms, and both the larger and the smaller form bent towards her and kissed her, much as the sheaves of corn had made ŏbeisance, in his dream, to Joseph.

Then gradually her eyes cleared and she looked at her mother, then at her father. For these she had exchanged — her heart cried out in its emptiness to John and Joanna. If Joanna — ministering to the goats at Up and Down — could but have known that, she would have given them even more green stuff than she did — for in her happiness she must have refused them nothing.

"Well, my dear," said the mother, "the world's a strange place, is n't it?" She spoke in a stilted, precise, careful voice — scarcely moving her lips as she spoke.

The father blew his nose and walked to the fireplace, and looked at himself in the mirror above it. "Don't upset yourself, Harriet," he said; "she's been well cared for."

"How many servants did they keep, dear?" asked Mrs. Blent, drying her tears.

"Servants?" said Hope; "only two or three — it does n't matter, does it?"

"We keep twelve in and four out — it'll be a nice

change for you, dear; you need n't say that you have n't been accustomed to a maid — see?"

"They were all my maids," said Hope, struggling between laughter and tears. Here was her mother, sequined, as she had always pictured her. Not sparsely either — but thickly — and that by day, which made her quite impossible. She was impossible. Hope knew that; and impossible in quite a different way from John and Joanna.

"Well, my dear, you have a right to an explanation. I said to your father this morning —'Father, we must explain things directly she comes.'"

"Explain away," said the father, arranging his tie and standing before the mirror, searching to discover in his reflection a reason for this daughter of his.

"Well, dear, it was like this — Before your father made money we were poor, desperately poor. We always had things nice, so to speak" — this was an after-thought — "but not like this, of course." She looked round the room complacently and Hope's eyes followed hers.

"No, not always like this," thought Hope, "there must have been a time when they happily could not have bought these things."

"It must seem strange, dear, but we felt strongly that if you bring children into the world, you must do your best for them — you agree, don't you?"

Hope nodded, feeling that the very best had been done for her.

"So, dear, when we were at our very worst — two

in arms and another coming — you were two years old, — not quite two, — I went to a meeting (your aunt stayed with you babies); I went to a meeting. Yes, I went to them then — one does, somehow or other, when one is poor — one must have amusement —"

Mrs. Blent folded her hands in her lap and gazed at her newly acquired daughter. The newly acquired daughter looked at the newly acquired mother — there were the sequins, closely set together, winking as the wearer moved, and a great longing for Joanna swept over the small heart of Hope. Mrs. Blent went on.

"I am telling you everything, hiding nothing. I went to a meeting, and there came up a question of a family of ten, left destitute. The lady interested in the case gave a harrowing description — whether true or not, I don't know. The children must be grown up by now — and out of their misery in one way or another — I should say the boys are porters probably — and the girls —"

"Yes, my dear, stick to the point, the point," said Mr. Blent.

"I am, dear, it all leads up. Well, as I was saying, the lady interested gave a harrowing description — whether true or not, I don't know — the children —"

"My dear, you have said that."

"You fluster me, Father. Well, I'll go on — the lady interested gave a harrowing description, whether true or not, I don't know. The children must be

grown up now and out of their misery, in one way or another — and she suggested that childless people might perhaps take the children. She had got so far when at the end of the table — or platform, perhaps, it was that time — yes, platform; I remember the red baize and some one tripping up over it — a little woman — a lady, badly dressed, but you could see she was a lady — got up and said, 'I will take six.'"

Hope's heart jumped — how like Jomammy to have said that — and Hope pictured the vicarage at Up and Down overrun by six children and Jomammy declaring them not one too many.

"Just as if she were buying buttons by the dozen, half-dozen, I mean," went on Mrs. Blent. "It raised a laugh, and one gentleman said: 'One at a time, please, ladies.'"

"Cut the parrot story, mother," said Mr. Blent gruffly.

"I am," said Mrs. Blent.

Hope, bewildered, looked from one parent to the other. Her mother went on: "Well, what was I saying? Yes, the little woman said she would take six and every one laughed. I believe if she'd said one it would have been settled then and there, and she would have adopted a plumber's child — but six! She sat down again very red in the face — pink, I should say — and the tears nearly rolled down her cheeks. They would have done so —"

"'Ware tears, Harriet!" said Mr. Blent.

"Well, my dear," — to Hope, — "if she had n't

cried, I should n't have done it — it was the tears I could n't stand. I waited until nearly every one was gone and I went up to Mrs. Templar — yes, it was Mrs. Templar — very big grey eyes — and I said, 'If you want one, will you take mine? A girl?'

"I should n't have done it if we had had the means, dear. You know that? And you were the prettiest — and to make a long story short, she came and saw you in your bath. She soaped herself all over taking you in her arms — she was in mourning, and she told you the story of 'The Three Bears,' — after you were dried and dressed that was, of course, — and we gave you to her on the understanding that you were not stinted — You were not?"

"No," said Hope faintly, "never stinted."

"That's right, dear. Mrs. Templar said she had a perambulator. I asked her if it had cee springs and she said, Yes, it had. I always wanted those for you. No doubt, seeing all this will make you wonder why we did n't claim you; but a promise is a promise — and we promised we should have no claim upon you — but now that it comes, dear, we are very glad to see you. We called you Hatty, but if you would rather be called Hope —"

"Please," said Hope, "but I don't know — that —"

"That what, dear?"

"Show her the house, Mother," so spake Mr. Blent, who plainly put his trust in riches and his 'money in pepper.'

"Come, dear," said Mrs. Blent, and Hope followed her out of the room: "We're fond of statues, dear, as you'll see."

Hope saw.

"They're easy stairs — though there's lots of them. I dare say the Templars had n't many?"

"Not many," said Hope.

"I should n't have chosen a vicarage for you, dear, but we were poor then — and it seemed to us all right. We're above vicarages now — in a sense. I always call on the clergyman and his wife, of course, when we are in the country; but you understand what I mean?" Mrs. Blent smiled. "There are three bathrooms — Father likes his own — I dare say at the Templars' —" Then something changed the current of her thoughts and she said: "Mrs. Templar must have missed her home, the peacocks — terraces, and all that."

Hope asked what peacocks?

"Well, dear, that she had peacocks, we knew, because she gave us a sitting of peacocks' eggs for a bazaar."

"But her father disowned her," said Hope, letting the possibilities of peacocks and their powers go unchallenged.

"The gardener sent the eggs or the gamekeeper or somebody — anyhow, it was that sort of house — peacocks always mean terraces. This is my room, dear." Mrs. Blent opened the door of a very large bedroom.

The house altogether, Hope thought, reduced her mother to the proportions of a large marble. The room was massively furnished. The wardrobes were imposing — the dressing-table immense.

"Silver gilt, the brushes and things," murmured Mrs. Blent, "did *She* . . .?"

"Her windows look on to lilac-bushes and apple-trees — in the spring they blossom and in the summer there is jessamine," said Hope hurriedly.

"Oh, yes, quite country things; there's a cab rank just opposite my windows. Father goes in a cab every day to the city. It's a fad of his — you'd think we had nothing of our own. It's his way to be unexpected."

"It's a very nice room," said Hope.

"Then there's the dressing-room, and two spare rooms. Above are more spare rooms. Follow me!" Hope followed. "Above again are the nurseries and schoolroom, above that the servants' rooms. There's a back-stairs, of course, and housemaids' cupboards. This, dear," she said, opening a door, "will be your room — it's cosy, is n't it?"

Hope saw red. Red curtains, red duvet, everything red — rich and elaborate. Her heart went back with a leap to the little room at the vicarage where the Italian mirror, flanked by two tall candlesticks, had stood out conspicuous and beautiful amidst the extreme simplicity of its surroundings.

"It's very nice," she said.

"Then there's the schoolroom."

Hope drew back. Were there children in the schoolroom? Brothers and sisters? Creatures of her brain, of which she had dreamed — knew existed for other children — but never for her.

"Only two children, dear, at home. Mabel is abroad and Julia at school. Susie is here and Hamilton. We thought, dear, when we parted with you that we should have a very large family — it looked like it, I'm sure — but man proposes — how does it go? You know! Susie is here and Hammy — you will find them shy, but very anxious to meet you."

She opened the door and Hope found herself face to face with two children — a girl and a boy.

"This is Miss Strickland," said Mrs. Blent, introducing the governess; "this is Hammy — this Susie — speak to your sister, children."

There was a silence — what child ever spoke when told to speak? The silence was broken by Hammy. He broke everything in the house, so his mother said, ruffling his hair.

He ducked to evade her hand and said to Hope: "I say, I did n't know you could have a sister without knowing it — did you know you had *me?*"

"No, I did n't," said Hope, wondering how this could have been possible.

"Now, is n't that rummy — Miss Strickland said, it could n't possibly be true — she said —"

"Hamilton!"

Called to attention, he subsided; but went on gazing at his sister and playing five-fingered exer-

cises on the seat of the chair which stood beside his. It was an invitation to sit down, Hope knew. She accepted it.

"I say, can you do dictation — or can you not? There are two kinds of people in the world — one kind can, and the other can't — which are you?"

"The can't kind," whispered Hope.

Hammy suppressed a chuckle of delight and laid a hot, sticky little hand on hers. "Why — did n't you come before?" he whispered.

"I did n't know you were here," said Hope, bending down until her cheek rested on the top of his head.

"Did n't you know I was in the wo-orld?"

Hope shook her head.

"Did n't you know I was bo-orn?"

Hope shook her head.

"I 've got one hundred and ten soldiers," he said, leaning against her — "and three dolls."

"Boys should n't have dolls," said Susie; "boys laugh because he likes dolls."

At this Hammy rose in his wrath: but Miss Strickland broke in, telling him to be quiet, she had a story to tell.

"To-day in the square," she said brightly, "Hammy had his doll, and some little boys in the street laughed at him, and he went to the railings and called out to them, 'If you don't like dolls you'll never be fathers.'"

"No more they will," said Hammy; and then back to Hope, whispering: "I 've got seventeen en-

gines — We go to the country sometimes — and to the seaside sometimes. I have a pony to ride and a donkey — if I want to — but I don't. Which d' you like best?"

"Hammy does n't really like riding," said Susie; "does he?" — this to Miss Strickland.

"No — what does he say? What do you say, Hammy?"

Hammy frowned.

"He says," said Miss Strickland, "'What's the use of me riding when I don't even know which side I'm going to fall off?' Is n't that it, Hammy?"

Hammy frowned.

"What a memory you have, Miss Strickland," said Mrs. Blent, beaming.

"I build railways in the country," said Hammy to Hope — "and castles at the seaside. I have my own money to buy things with. When it's Christmas-time, I'll buy you something — will you be a sister at Christmas-time?"

"I think so, Jammy," said Hope.

"She called me Jammy," he cried, delighted; "did you know you did? Did you on purpose?"

"That's because you're sticky," said Miss Strickland. "I told you to wash; go!" And Hammy, happy and jammy, slipped down from his chair and went into an adjoining room.

"Their own bathroom, dear," said Mrs. Blent, laying her hand on the back of Hope's chair, and bending over to impart this valuable piece of in-

formation. "Would you like to see it?" And it struck Hope that between impossible people there is just this difference — one shows goats when at a loss to amuse, the other bathrooms; yet between a goat and a bathroom, there is an immense difference — a far greater difference than between impossible people.

"Now, come and tell me all about yourself," said Mrs. Blent. And Hope followed her mother downstairs and into the drawing-room. They sat down on a bright blue satin, tightly-upholstered sofa, and Mrs. Blent piled cushions behind Hope's head. "You brown a little when you've been indoors, don't you?" she asked, looking attentively at the girl beside her.

"I *what?*" asked Hope, bewildered.

"Well, dear, when you came in you were so very pink and white. You're more all over one colour now. But still you've got a nice complexion. You had when you were born even. You want—some clothes, don't you? We are dressy people — rather."

Hope said nothing.

"Now, tell me, dear, all about yourself?"

Hope said nothing.

"You'll give us a trial? You won't stay the night? We could send for your things."

Hope shook her head: she must go. Her mother hoped she would come back. She looked at her, sighed, began to cry, cheered up, and said it was a funny world, was n't it? And, taking Hope's hand

in hers, she drew her towards her. "You were affectionate to Mrs. — Templar, I expect, were n't you? Well, dear, it's only natural. It's what we lost in doing the best for you — I am a stranger to you, but there *is* the mother instinct."

Hope went downstairs, followed closely by her mother. "You will, dear? Money is no object — you would enjoy Folkestone and — all that. Father talks of Scotland — a moor — he can afford it, and it's *the* thing to do."

Hope went on down: out from the darkness of the landing shot a small figure, clutching at Hope as she passed, catching her by the hand, fervently beseeching her — "You will — you will — you *must* —" It was Hammy, his hand no longer hot or sticky, but just a chain, holding her — "A child's arms around one's neck are chains one does not willingly break — or easily." Jomammy's words came back to her. "Yes, yes, Jammy." Then to her mother: "Yes, I will come, thank you so much —" She looked up, her mother was leaning over the banisters, the sequins on her dress blinking.

"I did n't mean sequins by day," thought Hope, as she got into the cab, "and I did n't say I would go but —" There was a chain that Hammy had forged fastened round her heart. She would not willingly — could not easily break it.

Mrs. Blent went — for her — quickly downstairs into the library and shut the door. "Well, Father?" she said.

IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE

Father was asleep in his chair. He was the kind of fathers that mothers let sleep, so she sat down quite close beside him that she might watch him. Then, growing tired of watching him and ashamed of finding him ugly, she turned her eyes away from him and looked back — back years: they were filled with tears. The years? Why not? Her eyes were filled now. Perhaps it had been her heart then — anyhow, it is not every one who finds a daughter that was lost. Two or three tears fell; she wiped them away; put on her glasses and looked round the room; from the curtains to the carpet; from the carpet to the china; from the china to the flowers; from the flowers to the statues. She had much to be thankful for; Father still slept. She sat and waited. She knew that when he awoke he would ask her if he had snored, and she knew she would say he had not snored, and she knew he would know she had lied. What he might say about Hope she did not know. She had no precedent to go upon. She waited.

XVII

HOPE drove back to Maud's flat with her cheeks aflame: her heart aflame, her whole world a conflagration. She burst into the room where Maud was sitting, awaiting developments. Poor Maud —

"Well?" cried Maud, turning like a teetotum to face Hope. "Well?"

"They are impossible people," burst out Hope, — "impossible!"

"All your fathers and mothers are impossible, my good woman — how funny it is! I never knew any one with so many impossible parents. Does it ever strike you that the fault may be yours?"

"These are differently impossible — quite different from the others."

Maud asked, In what way? She begged Hope to sit down — to calm herself. Hope sat down on the floor, beside Maud. Maud had spun round again, and was facing the fire. Hope took off her hat, jabbed the pin into the crown, and threw it on the sofa — ran her fingers through her golden hair and rubbed her eyes.

"House?" said Maud laconically.

"Large — white — gold — carpeted deeply — curtained heavily — draped!"

"Comfortable," said Maud, ticking it off on her fingers — "One — comfortable. Mother?"

"Fattish — fairish — kind — sequined —"

Maud ticked off the next finger — "Two — kind. Father?"

"City."

"?"

"Just city."

Maud ticked off her next finger. "Third — rich. Servants?"

"Many."

Maud put her head on one side regarding her fourth finger. Numbers might mean — comfort or discomfort. "Family?"

"Children — two — girl — boy — nice boy — very — a very nice boy — and two at school, I forgot."

"Brother," said Maud, lifting her fourth finger. "Now, listen, Hope. House, comfortable. Mother, kind. Father, rich. And brother — brother, nice — very nice. Can you afford to throw them away? Take the other side — John?"

"Don't!" said Hope.

"House?"

A gesture from Hope.

"Up and Down for ever?"

"Never — but Up and Down for ever rather than Mr. and Mrs. Blent for —" Hope's chains tightened — there was Hammy.

Willing Manners came in to hear the news and to have supper. He heard Hope's news and enjoyed Maud's supper. Hope would have none.

"Why not?" asked Maud.

"Because she is fat—and I am her daughter. He is fat—I am his child. They are both fat. I am their child—and I can never be theirs except in the flesh."

"I believe you could have acted after all—Hope," said Maud, and she looked to Willing to support her.

He could not do that. He was too much of an artist. He owed it to himself to be critical. Hope was no actress, but she was, in her own way, attractive. As he said good-night to her he was anxious she should know he found her so. Out of Maud's hearing, he said if she (Hope) should find her parents quite impossible, she must remember—

"What?" asked Hope. They stood in the tiny hall of Maud's flat; there seemed just room in the world for them alone. Even Maud was out of it, in the drawing-room.

"I am always willing to offer you a home."

"Can you afford it?" asked Hope.

And he announced that with the help of her four parents, it should not devolve upon him — entirely.

"Then you are in fun?" said Hope; and for the moment he was n't sure. Maud was in yellow satin — and in yellow satin he hated her. Hope was in black, and in black he loved her — loved all women.

Next morning Hope had decided to go to her new parents and see what it was like. In the middle of the night she had awakened to feel a child's hand in hers. The touch of John's hand on her shoulder had been light compared to the heavy drag of the

child's hand on her heart. It pulled; she must go. She went. She was welcomed: not as Jomammy would have welcomed her, with shyness in her eyes and hope in her heart, but by money — as much as she wanted. A cheque was pinned to her pin-cushion. She felt a housemaid, tipped, in the house of her father. There was more to be had for the asking — to buy clothes — furs — boots — shoes — hats — lovely underclothing — things of which she had dreamed. Her mother was anxious to go shopping with her. Hope respected this new mother of hers more than she had thought possible when she saw with what respect she was treated in shops. It was not that she had a way with her as Joanna had; but she had an account. Nothing was a trouble to the shop people, just as nothing was too expensive for Mrs. Blent. Hope's small heart expanded like a flower that opens its petals to the sun. She still felt it impossible to sink her individuality in the Blents and become one of them, but they were very kind, and insidiously into her heart stole the good things of the house of Blent — the food (glutton that she was), the quiet servants, the comforts (sybarite that she was). The vulgarity hurt her less and less every day. It began to amuse her: then she began to excuse it. It is easily excused where money is. People respect the rich man who has risen. "All the more credit to him," they say, and they give him credit, both bankers and tradesmen. Friends give him credit for a great deal. Hope found herself

in the position of friend — a complacent friend. It was all so horribly easy and comfortable. After all, why mind what they had been —her parents? People crowded to their house, when there was anything worth crowding for — or to. In a crowd 'Father' and 'Mother' were lost. Most women were taller than Mrs. Blent. Most men taller than Mr. Blent. Hope stood out amongst her family. She shone. What a girl never forgets is the gift of beauty — or rather does she remember with gratitude the giver. Mrs. Blent had given her beauty — in the sense that she had polished it, burnished it, and made it shine resplendently; and for that Hope was grateful. In a wider sense, of course, she owed her beauty to Mrs. Blent, and her narrow escape from ugliness to Mr. Blent.

Joanna, perhaps, would have watched for the beauty which shines from a girl's eyes, would have fostered it, fanning the spark of spirituality into a burning flame, and at the end of it all people might have said, "What a charming face that Templar girl has! What a pity she does n't marry!"

Hope was now more than a girl with a charming face. She was old Blent's daughter — an enviable position, and as old Blent's daughter she had to write a letter to Joanna — a position less enviable. She would rather have written any other letter in the world — at least she supposed so. There could be none more difficult to write; and yet such a few words would have satisfied Joanna. She only

wanted to hear she was really Hope's mother after all. Women want so little.

They should have been easy enough words to write when one thinks of all Joanna had done for Hope. Not that she thought she had done anything, knowing there was nothing she would not do.

Hope sat down at the writing-table in her room. The ink-pot was silver, — the pen, the blotter, all silver. Hope held it of no account. It was hideous. "Dearest Jomammy," she began: the words dried. She inked them over again — and again. Then she tore up the sheet of paper and began again. "Dearest Jomammy, I hate silver things — the pen is so cold — the blotter so heavy — cold too!" She tore that up and began again: —

Dearest Jomammy, — I cannot thank you enough for all you have done for me. I shall never forget it. But one's duty after all is to one's own people; is n't it? Dearest Jomammy, it's so difficult to write. But you understand — always. My new father and mother are very kind, but I shall never forget you and Daddy John — it's funny, is n't it? I always felt as if I were meant to be rich. You remember you used to laugh at me. Now that I have silver, I want gold — and much fine gold. I hope if ever I can do anything for you and Daddy John, you will let me know, because you did so much for me. I can't say what I mean exactly — but you will know. Your loving

HOPE.

And she put it into an envelope, addressed it, and posted it; and when Joanna read it, she went out into the woods to put her soul in order.

In the evening John said Martha had told him there had been a letter from London.

"Such a dear letter," said Joanna. "She says she can never forget what we did for her — and although she feels she must stay where she is — she will always" — Joanna paused, looked at John — saw the tender expectancy in his face and said — "love us best — that we are —"

"Her father and mother — at least in the spiritual sense," said John, dreaming. "There should be no question of loving best."

"No," said Joanna, "there should not be."

"Dear child!" And as John smoked his pipe he smiled and from time to time recalled to Joanna's memory things she had never forgotten: the first time Hope had walked, — quite by herself, — the first time she had called him 'Daddy John,' the first time she had called Joanna 'Jomammy.'

"She never called us father and mother," said Joanna.

"Nor did Faith," said John softly. "If she had lived to call us by name —" He lifted a hand and dropped it again, expressing in a movement all he could not say — then he added: "It made her going easier for us, perhaps."

"Just as it does Hope's going now," said Joanna.

"Ah, but she will come back."

He was silent for a few moments; then said: "Hope will come back to us, but to Faith we shall go."

XVIII

Hope, on taking up her abode in the house of her father, found Sunday a day on which luncheon was a meal of great importance and some ceremony. Her first Sunday she sat next her father. He at one end of the table, Mrs. Blent at the other; Susie and Hammy here and there, and Miss Strickland in her accustomed place. On the other side of Mr. Blent sat a Miss Broser, to whom Hope was introduced. She wondered who Miss Broser might be. Another impossible person. Of all perhaps the most impossible. But she was entirely at her ease and completely at home. Blatantly so, thought Hope. So much so that she made Hope feel out of it and Mr. Blent awkward. Hope saw that at once. He was on his good behaviour. He wavered in midair between the choice of a spoon and a fork — floundering as he fell.

Turning to Hope, he said: "You lunched with Lady Norman sometimes, I suppose?"

Up rose Miss Broser proclaiming her official position. "Lady Agnes Norman, Mr. Blent. Remember — if a Duke had four daughters, the three eldest of whom married an Earl, a Viscount, and a Baron, while the youngest married her father's —"

"Footman," sang Hammy, continuing the well-known quotation (well known to the Blents). "Hear

that, Jimmy — old boy?" This to the discomfited footman.

Mrs. Blent implored Hammy to be quiet. She was shocked — distressed — flushed. Miss Broser to the rescue.

"One moment, Mrs. Blent — here you are mistaken. In the best set that remark would amuse enormously. It is a bogus refinement, as it were, to be shocked. You may laugh — within limits, of course — at this particular kind of thing — within the bounds of moderation you may laugh." This repetition gave James time to get out of the room. When he had gone Miss Broser went on, "There is a side issue, I admit, — which is that James may not understand."

"He came from a very good place," said Mrs. Blent, crumbling her bread.

"Yes, and he knows he came from a good place. He may also know that what one family may laugh at another may not. I am not sure on that point. He is young to have grasped the social limits of humour — if there is such an expression. It is better, therefore, that Hammy should be careful in future." Miss Broser spoke kindly, yet Mr. Blent had reddened and paled again as he deplored his stupidity — or carelessness, rather. He pleaded that extenuation.

"Will you never remember, Father?" asked Mrs. Blent.

Hope looked from her father to Miss Broser, from

Miss Broser back to her father. It was up to Miss Broser to do something. She did it, calmly, incisively, suavely; Mr. Blent protesting all the time that he did know.

"To know the peerage — in and out" — said Miss Broser, — "to know who marries who, and so forth, errs on the side of too much knowledge. There is no reason, unless you move in a particular set, that you should know the intimate affairs of that particular set. It is not incumbent upon you to know all about people unless you are personally acquainted with the people themselves. On broad lines — learn enough not to make mistakes, such as Mr. Blent has just made, but do not claim an intimate knowledge of people who do not know you."

"I always remember who Lord Simplex married," muttered Mr. Blent.

And Miss Broser said, *that* marriage having resulted in a *cause célèbre* might quite correctly be remembered by every one — of whatever social status he might chance to be. "Poor Simplex!" she added.

Here Mr. Blent turned to Mrs. Blent, certain of support. "This is not lamb, Mother," he said.

And Mother replied, "I paid for lamb, Father."

"Mutton with mint sauce may always pass as lamb," interposed Miss Broser. "The Duchess never questioned it — so long as there was mint sauce after the Duke's death."

"Impossible people," thought Hope. But she

had a vague suspicion that Joanna would have enjoyed it all — and Lady Agnes. Possibly any one whose parents the Blents were not.

As Hope was still wondering over Miss Broser, the door was flung open and a man came in. There were screams from Hammy, and confusion everywhere. Then the man sat down beside Miss Broser and, laying his cheek against hers, said: "Well, old Proser, what is it now? The latest jargon — or is it bogus refinement to-day?"

"Sunburnt young men do not kiss — young women — in public," said Miss Broser, putting her hand on the man's head and pressing his cheek closer to hers.

"But," said the sunburnt man, "you don't come and tuck me up as you used to do. You can't imagine how I have dreamed of those tucking-ups."

Then the words came back to Hope, "One never dreams as one dreams beside a camp-fire." She looked at Paul Blunt, and he at her, but nothing she had said came back to him. He took as little notice of her now as he had taken interest in her before. He was engrossed in Hammy and Susie. They ruffled his hair. They climbed all over him, untied his tie, and Hope knew that for him she did not even exist. No man will appear dishevelled before the woman he wishes to attract.

Hope never felt tidier. On what a volcano stands the stranger sister of a small, little-known brother. Hammy, like a lion released, sprang upon her — ruffling her hair, pulling it down, shouting as he did

it — "Be funny — you!" and waited. Hope had never felt less like being funny in her life.

Paul Blunt looked at her earnestly and, leaning towards her, said: "I like you better like that." And for the first time he looked at her as though she had a right to exist.

"Men like hair, dear," said Mrs. Blent, as she and Hope went upstairs together. "Who is he, dear? He's your father's cousin — your cousin, too. His father started making a fortune long before we did and went back to the old way of spelling the name. Father did n't. Blent seemed good enough — but Blunt sounds better — but there it is. The girls can change their name and the boys can slip into Blunt, if they like. Paul is very distinguished — he need n't be, I'm sure, with all his money: but he is. Miss Broser was his governess, years ago, of course. He makes a ridiculous fuss of her. After she left the Blunts she was with the Duchess of Milford. In the days when we were at a loss sometimes — in social things, I mean — she used to come and instruct us. Now that we know — we still ask her to come on Sundays — because lunch is her dinner — and we don't like to dismiss her altogether, although her work is done, so to speak."

"It is kind of you," said Hope. "I have met Captain Blunt before."

"Where, dear?"

"At Lady Agnes's."

"Yes, dear, that's right, *Lady Agnes*."

XIX

THE months passed by and Hope was carried away on the stream of a comfortable life. She made no effort to get out of the stream. She liked the ease of her progress. She was gently borne; at times she drifted. The waters were never too deep, the current never too strong. This was the life of which she had dreamed — with different parents, of course; but she had come to realise that one cannot have everything — and she had Hammy. She had never before known intimately a small boy; and any one who knows him must know that even the least delightful of the species is worth knowing, and Hammy was really delightful. There is nothing in the world to compare with a small boy, unless it is, perhaps, a small girl, and she is absolutely different, except in that she too is delightful. But there is the chivalry, innate, of the small boy, which is very attractive; his manliness, which is very appealing, in its boyishness; his frankness, his honesty; his feelings, touchy and sensitive sometimes, perhaps, but always understandable, to those who can and will understand. There is his keenness (nobody is half so keen). His understanding of the deepest mysteries. He will instruct you in the intricacies of machinery — the ways and goings-on of motors, as no man can: his 'you see' explains everything and makes

you believe that you too have vision. Then there are moments — if you show real intelligence — or a truly humble idiotcy — when his hand steals through your arm — and, well, every woman knows how absurdly gratifying and satisfying is that silent tribute. (The boy grows to be a man — the tribute remains the same: he still pays it to a gratified woman.)

All this was Hope's. Less satisfying but intensely comfortable were the changes of the season, as regarded clothes. Autumn meant furs; spring, the casting-off of these furs; the ordering of new clothes in their place, light and pretty. Summer came to mean muslins and chiffons, and no bother or trouble about any of them. She was quite sure Joanna had not the slightest notion how easily these things came to those who had the money to pay, the taste to choose, and the love of the things. That was where Joanna failed so conspicuously. She was content as she was. Mrs. Blent wondered if Hope was satisfied. She took everything for granted: expressed admiration of nothing. Not even the magnificence of the house had impressed her. This Mrs. Blent felt to be well-bred; but to her Hope might have been natural. The statues even left her cold. She had not admitted the ingenuity of Father in putting them all to some good use. The Venus de Milo wore a coronet of electric lamps, thereby justifying her magnificent existence. He might have caused arms to be bestowed upon the beauty, but he said he

stopped short of that. And he vowed the coronet improved her: no one could deny that — or that she would have been a duchess had she lived. Hope did not deny it. She said nothing. And her way up and downstairs was lighted from the crown of the brow of beauty immortalised. Mrs. Blent thought she might say something. There were other statues holding baskets of begonias. The colour warmed them up and a florist came every morning to see to the plants. Hope could not have been accustomed to that. It was absurd to pretend she had been. To her own mother, too!

"Ask any one you like to dinner, dear," said Mrs. Blent; "we are only too anxious to make your friends ours."

Hope hesitated. She knew now that Maud Chandler's clothes were not what they ought to be — they looked pretty, but Hope knew too much of their past to be able to appreciate them.

They could not really look nice made up out of last year's remnants, and the trimmings of the last ten years' wear. Hope, conscious of the through and through daintiness of her own new clothes, had become very fastidious and distrustful of the origins of Maud's foundations.

Willing Manners? She would like to impress him. But would he be impressed? Would he ever get past the Venus at the top of the stairs?

"Mr. Manners might come," she said; but did not add — "for copy" — as she might have done.

"Ask him, dear; what about Lady Agnes?"

Hope did not know — she hardly knew her well enough.

"But Mr. and Mrs. Templar were so intimate. Father talks of putting the footmen into silk stockings."

"Oh, I don't think it is necessary," said Hope. "I think —"

"Well, dear, it's all the same to me. I say it would n't alter the taste of the sauces — and taste is the thing, is n't it?"

Hope was not sure about Lady Agnes; she would think about it.

"She is in town, dear. I saw her name in the 'Morning Post' yesterday."

Hope said she would go and see her.

"That's right, dear; wear your best clothes. I'll drive you there. We will take the second man, we don't always with the car — but Lady Agnes might notice if we did n't."

"How would she see?" asked Hope. And Mrs. Blent said she might be looking out of the window.

Mrs. Blent drove Hope to the Normans' house in Upper Brook Street. Lady Agnes was at home, although she was not looking out of the window, so far as Hope could see. Jomammy would have been looking out of every window, had it been possible, if she had been in London. What are windows for, she would have asked, but to frame the curious outlook of country cousins?

It was strange how often Hope thought of Joanna; only strange in that she tried not to think about her at all. It was difficult.

The butler announced Hope as Miss Templar — so it was evident she rose above the disguise of her fashionable clothes. Of that she was glad. Lady Agnes was surprised to see her; Hope knew that; at first she might have been expecting her, so little notice did she take of her. Then, looking up from her writing, she said: "Oh, it's you? I'm so sorry. I thought it was some one else."

Then she was delightful to Hope, drew her down on to the sofa, admired her, and laying her hand on hers, said, "Was it worth it?"

"What I gave for it?" asked Hope, choosing to suppose Lady Agnes meant her frock.

"Was it?"

Hope shook her head. "Nothing is — is it?"

"That's what I want to know."

"How are they — at home?"

"Ah, that's one of the things I wanted to know. It is still 'at home,' is it? Because it ought to be — it ought to be."

Hope nodded: it was. Therein lay the difficulty. Here she was, dressed by Mrs. Blent — and thinking of Joanna.

"Do you want to know how they are?"

Hope nodded.

"Well, Joanna wanders about. She feeds the goats, nurses the babies — and the sick; loves her

John — laughs with Widow Waysey — cries with Mrs. Don —"

"Why?"

"Oh, only because Mrs. Don feels like it — amuses my Humphrey. By the way, my Diana adores her; I suppose all girls do — at Diana's age you must have done —"

"I was at school so much," murmured Hope.

"That was a pity," said Lady Agnes.

"One must learn," said Hope.

"Yes — but I find Joanna teaches my Diana so much no one else can teach her."

This was n't what Hope had come for. "I wondered," she said, "if you would come and dine with us one night — my father and mother — would be so pleased."

"I shall — hate them."

"I don't mind so long as you don't laugh at them — they are very kind."

"Yes, but I am on the side of the angels, John and Joanna."

"There are no sides. The Blents are my father and mother. I can't do anything but stay with them, can I?"

"No — you can't, I'm sure; I will come, if only to see how they compare with John and Joanna — write and let me know when. You are looking very nice, my dear." And Lady Agnes laid her hand affectionately on Hope's shoulder, and Hope went out from her presence pleased, triumphant even.

She would she had looked more than 'nice'; but to have looked that was something.

Father and Mother looked quite possible in evening dress — she thought. So long as they did n't babble it would be quite all right. If only she could get a Frenchman to come to dinner, all would be well. Nothing so effectually silenced them as the terror of being addressed in French. She must try.

She was at the top of the stairs. Lady Agnes was standing at the drawing-room door. Somebody was coming up the stairs — running. It sounded like some one running, very lightly — some one in a hurry — some one very happy — nearer and nearer it came — a girl — as light on her feet as a bird on the wing; she nearly ran into Hope, apologised, turned to Hope, a lovely, laughing face and said, "I 'm so sorry, miss."

Hope drew back to let the girl pass, and Lady Agnes, from the doorway, said, "There you are!" — So she had been expecting some one — and it was Milly she was expecting!

The door was shut and Hope was left outside.

XX

Mrs. Blent had been waiting in the car for Hope. It looked better, she explained. Hope laughed. What did it matter how things looked to people who made friends with girls like Milly?

"Was n't she all right, dear?" asked Mrs. Blent anxiously,—"I mean Lady Agnes." It seemed quite impossible that any one could be anything but delighted to see this really wonderful daughter of hers—a daughter of whom any one might be proud.

"She was delightful, of course."

"But, she won't dine?"

"She will dine."

"Well, there, dear, what did I tell you?"

"You told me she would be looking out of the window."

"That was a *façon de parler*, so to speak," said Mrs. Blent, smiling. "A very pretty girl went in just before you came out."

"Yes—I know the girl—she has no right to be there—none. She's a bad character."

"No, dear, you don't say so? Lady Agnes works for those societies. Dear, dear, and she looked—well, she might have been any one."

"She's a girl from Up and Down—she was sent away from a place for stealing."

"Stealing! But that is impossible — from a place — *place* dear; that makes it impossible."

"And Jomammy befriended her and did absurd things — gave her the goats to look after."

"Goats?" said Mrs. Blent, mystified.

"And swallows to watch," added Hope.

"Swallows?" said Mrs. Blent, more mystified still. "What for?"

"I don't know," said Hope, "but I believe because the swallows were young and helpless — and soft — but what the goats were, I can't imagine — odious, I thought them."

"I am glad you came to us, dear. I never heard of ladies and gentlemen having anything to do with goats. Mrs. Templar can't be fit to take care of young people. It's a mercy you are what you are, dear; birth does tell. We have much to be thankful for. I thought a clergyman's wife would be all right."

"So she is — so she is — you can't understand — she's so right that she's odd. I mean she carries Christianity to an extreme."

"Your father always says it's all very well, but it's not a practical proposition — and Father knows." Mrs. Blent said it with regret. It would have been nice to have found Father wrong for once. But he was right, in the strength of his disbeliefs as in everything else.

"Goats and swallows," she murmured. "What next? Did Lady Agnes admire your things — clothes?"

Hope shook her head. She was past caring what Lady Agnes thought, who had proved herself a woman of no discrimination — or taste. At the end of an hour or two of confused thought, Hope came to the happy conclusion that Lady Agnes was reforming Milly.

But does a girl run upstairs, gaily and happily — like a dancing wind — as Milly did, when she was going to find, at the top, only cold reformation? No!

Hope went down to dinner feeling dull and depressed. She opened the drawing-room door. With his back to the fireplace stood Paul Blunt: he was alone in the room. She shut the door — and he and she were alone.

He looked up. "There you are," he said. "Did Hammy give you my message?"

"What message?"

"Never mind. You puzzle me. I have been puzzling over you ever since I saw you." He looked at her. "You have tidied your hair again."

Hope put her hands to her head and felt the smooth bands of her hair; they were shining, she knew, under the electric light. "So have you," she said.

"Hammy's a young ruffian, is n't he?"

"He's nice," said Hope, sitting down on a sofa.

"Snice?" asked Paul.

Hope laughed. "Snice."

"Where were you all the time?" he asked.

"Where was I?"

"Yes."

"You don't remember?"

"How should I? I asked my father. He did n't know. He had forgotten you existed. Why did you ever go?"

"They were poor then."

"Well, what had that to do with it?" Paul frowned. It had not occurred to him that poor people parted with their children more easily than rich.

"They thought they ought to give me a chance." Hope clasped her hands round her knees as Joanna did — she found the attitude a little strained. She unclasped her hands and held them out after the manner of Lady Agnes, and found that more comfortable; it also showed off her hands to advantage, so she decided to adopt it until she grew tired.

"And where can a child be better than with her parents?" asked Paul.

"It was n't my fault," said Hope, smiling. That he was interested was something — she could forgive him his bluntness — no, she did n't mean to make a bad joke — she felt much too miserable — yet happier in these last few minutes than she had been all day.

"I can't understand people parting with a child," he explained. "Tell me, were you happy?"

"Very."

"And the people you went to — mothered and fathered you?"

"Mothered and fathered me."

"And gave you everything?"

"Everything."

"And made you good, loving, obedient, and tidy?"

"My other mother was the untidiest person you ever saw."

"And her untidiness made you tidy?"

"Yes."

"Was she lovable?"

"Very — you would have thought so."

"Why should I have thought so?"

"Because — her hair was blown about — as she used to say — by the rushing winds of heaven — her boots squabbed by the good rain — muddied by the dear earth — and — I forget! She treated the village people as if they were — human. She stood out among them all — stood out against the sunset — in the churchyard — do you — remember? You said you would never forget."

"Are you the girl?" asked Paul Blunt eagerly, taking a step towards her. Impulsively she put out her hands. He took them in his and he sat down on the sofa beside her. "You are that girl — the girl I should never have remembered who lived with that woman I shall never forget?"

Hope nodded. "I lived with Jomammy."

"She took you as a baby away from this?"

"*This* did not exist then," said Hope.

"But your father and mother did, and she took you from them and she brought you up, and you came back of your own free-will — to this?"

"I came back, yes, willingly — where should a child be better than with its parents?"

"With her — And she? What did she feel? And he?"

"John and Joanna?"

"Yes."

"I can't quite make out. I think they were sorry."

"And you?"

Hope looked at Paul. She must be honest and truthful. He would see through any affectation of either. For answer, she stuck out her foot — in the satin shoe with the paste buckle — then there were silk stockings to be taken into account. She pulled up her skirt disclosing her underskirt of lace, powdered with tiny rosebuds; she dropped her skirt over it again, her skirt of white tulle like drifting mist; and Paul looking, thought of Joanna with her hair blown about by the rushing winds of heaven — her shoes squabbed by the good rain — muddied by the dear earth — and knew her to be the companion he would have chosen to walk with through a wide world.

"Tell me about her," he said.

"What is there to tell? Her little girl died — as a baby."

"That's in her eyes," said Paul thoughtfully.

"And she was heart-broken," went on Hope.

"That's in her smile."

"And she adopted me."

"That's in her arms."

"And she was the quaintest mother imaginable."

"That's just herself."

"But you don't know her," said Hope, finding Paul even stranger than John and Joanna — and a little alarming too. Would she never meet comfortable, ordinary people?

"No — you must tell me all about her."

And she told him all she could think of about Joanna, and things she had not known she knew she told him, and still he wanted more. When she had done, — there was really nothing more, "unless," as the Irishman said, "she would be tellin' him a lie," — he said, "And you left her — can leave her — for this?"

Hope for answer put out her feet in the buckled shoes and silk stockings. She looked at him under her eyelashes. Were silks and satins arguments — strong arguments — to a man like Paul? Would he ever understand the longing for "things" that sometimes possesses a girl? — a longing that girls who always have, and have always had, "things" can never appreciate.

The door opened and in came Mr. Blent. "You want more light," he said, turning up more light, and Hope's hair shone like pure gold and her buckles shone like diamonds under its brilliance. "Making friends, eh?" he said. "You're cousins, you know? It is n't every day you find a pretty cousin, eh, Paul? You explorers think there's nothing worth looking

for in the old country. Where in Africa would you find purer gold than this?" — and he touched Hope's hair. She shrank from his touch. She was not yet accustomed to her father.

"You must go to the theatre together," he said.

"Shall we go to a play?" asked Paul, turning to Hope.

Hope's heart beat with excitement. "I should love it." And this play not 'for copy,' she thought triumphantly — but for herself.

"What shall it be — Shakespeare?"

"No — we saw Shakespeare the other day," she said, and Paul smiled. Was it only the other day he had seen Joanna — a small dark figure against the gorgeous setting of the sun, the background of molten clouds.

"You will like a musical comedy," he said.

"Why should I?" asked Hope, resenting his assurance.

"Because all young things your age do — when shall we go?" And Hope naturally said, "To-morrow," and he took a notebook from his pocket. No, not to-morrow; he was engaged; and the next day and the day after — it must be next week.

For next week Hope waited. Every moment seemed weighted — never dragged days so slowly. And of Milly she never thought; but only of Paul, and of those engagements that had filled his book. What was he doing on all those days? There was a side of his life which she would never know. There

must always be those women whom he admired, of whom he dreamed beside the camp-fires — brilliant women who could talk — who liked plays, not musical comedies — who were natural, like Joanna, yet tidy and beautifully dressed. And she thought, What more of Joanna could she tell him? And crowding to her mind came thousands of things Jomammy had done for her that she had forgotten. Even now she was amazed and wondered if she was n't making them up, just to light the spark of enthusiasm in the eyes of Paul Blunt.

XXI

JOANNA had received many letters from Elizabeth reporting the progress of Milly. The progress was as rapid as it was remarkable. Not only had the girl proved extraordinarily adaptive, but she had initiation and originality. In speaking, her enunciation was not so pure as it should be, but that was only natural and would in time be corrected. And she had so fascinating a way of talking, so delightful a voice, that her friends quickly adopted her way of speaking instead of Milly theirs, which, of course, was a disappointment to Elizabeth. As to her appearance? She was in great good looks and everywhere she went she was admired. She was now Elizabeth's friend (Elizabeth had no objection to the word partner), and it must be understood she no longer dusted the dark room. (Joanna was quite certain the dark room was none the worse for that.) Milly was very happy, but had a curious desire to see Mrs. Don. What did Joanna advise?

"Curious desire?" said Joanna, when she had read the letter. Knowing Milly, she could not find the desire curious. It was to Milly perfectly natural to wish to return to Up and Down. But Hope had expressed no overwhelming desire to see Joanna. She said she would wait till the summer. Joanna looked out of her window. Across the casement the

apple-tree had stretched its branches (arms they seemed to Joanna) laden with blossom, pink and white. They waved to her in the wind and scattered petals in handfuls on to her window-sill, so that she might feel how soft they were and see how exquisitely they were tinted. Summer would soon be here. The daffodils beneath her window nodded their heads to her in their friendly manner, bending to the wilful wind. You must give way to the wind or it will never leave you alone — so they made the best of it, sharing its merriment. The hawthorn in the hedges was like drifting snow, piled high; the cherry blossoms made a fairyland of the woods — and a world of beauty for Joanna — everything conspiring together to that end. And in the summer Hope was coming. But Milly was coming now, and up the village went Joanna to break the news to Mrs. Don.

Mrs. Don on hearing the news pursed her lips: "She'll be dressed up fine, she will — and me as I am —"

Joanna said she believed it was Mrs. Don's face Milly wanted to see.

"Not much to see there, I'm sure," said Mrs. Don. (The least that could be said of Mrs. Don's face was that there was too much of it.) "And when does she come?" she asked.

Joanna said she thought she might come at any moment.

"Should n't be surprised if she was wearing the rainbow by this time," said Mrs. Don; "she's cried

for it often enough, and she's one to get what she wants in the end. You see!"

Joanna looked over the tops of the geranium plants — out of the window — and down the village, like a bird on the wing, came a girl running. By her clothes Joanna would have judged her a village girl, but no village girl known to Joanna ran as this girl was running. She wore a blue cotton frock, and a straw hat with a ribbon round it. She opened the garden gate; she knew just how you must lift it first, then push it. She opened the cottage door, humouring that, too, according to its need — and in one moment her arms were round her mother.

"Why, Milly, child," exclaimed Mrs. Don. "You're just as you were, sure enough." But Joanna saw she was not.

Joanna stole out of the cottage so that the woman and child should be alone together; but Mrs. Don called her back. "Please, ma'am." And Joanna came back and, taking Milly's hand, said: "Well, Milly, have you discovered a new bird yet?" And Milly said: "How did you know? It's Miss Column's surprise." And she drew from her pocket a letter.

"I thought you would," said Joanna.

"Did you?" said Milly. "You remember the little swallows?"

Joanna remembered them perfectly. By now they were building nests of their own. Milly must come and see if she recognised them grown up.

"They are building there now?" she asked. And Joanna said swallows were building there.

"Well, what sort of a bird have you discovered, Milly?" asked Mrs. Don, "a lark or a sparrow?" And she chuckled at her own joke. It was not often she made one, but there was something infectious about Milly's gaiety. "She made you want to laugh — that she did," said Mrs. Don later — to those who would listen. And the whole village was willing — for a time. "I was thinking you'd be fine, Milly, but *I* made this, surely?" And as she asked the question she pulled at Milly's dress.

Milly said, "Yes, I did n't want them to be asking my name at the station."

"And the bird?" asked Joanna. And Milly, the bird-lover, the enthusiast — almost an ornithologist — started off on a description of the bird she had discovered. As Joanna had prophesied, it was, indeed, a rare bird. It was brownish — and bluish — with strange spots upon it — and streaks here and there — she had seen it only for a moment — it had flown away and the under-wings were orange and there was a kind of halo round it. And Joanna was quite convinced that the climate of the most northern part of Scotland had not suited Milly. She had found it too exhilarating — and bracing. But it became her wonderfully — the describing of the bird. Her eyes sparkled and her cheeks glowed under the stress of her emotion. Joanna believed firmly that even the oldest and dryest of ornithologists would

be interested in this bird of Milly's discovering. Joanna hoped she might find another — its perfect mate.

She left Mrs. Don and Milly together — Mrs. Don showing Milly a broken teapot — the best china — and Milly promising to mend it, holding the broken spout in her fingers, fitting it to the broken part — consoling Mrs. Don — encouraging her. Joanna saw that the fingers holding the broken spout were delicate, beautifully shaped, — the hand that held the teapot, roughened with work, red, clumsy — Milly patted it. To her it had been a tender hand — for its size.

Joanna went off to read Elizabeth's letter. She stopped at the first gate she came to, and, leaning against it, she opened the letter and read: —

Dear Joanna, — Milly is going at once to see Mrs. Don. She won't wait. She is taking this to you. You will probably hear from her that she has discovered a new bird. I knew she would. I cannot tell you how proud I am — and delighted. I do not claim that it had never been seen before; but Mr. Willow — a professor of ornithology — quite a young man for a professor — was here yesterday and he cannot place it. He spent a long time questioning Milly. He is tremendously interested. We shall see her on the platform yet. I feel convinced she has a great future. Lady Agnes has taken her up and is greatly interested in her education. She is learning to speak in public herself and takes Milly with her to classes. It appears that Milly has a great gift for speaking: but speaks too fluently — in fact, has too much to say. Lady Agnes says if they can only find a subject on which Milly knows nothing she

will get on well. That, of course, is fun! The first day at the class the subject chosen was "The conditions under which the poor live in agricultural districts." It was unfortunate; of course, as Milly says, not one lady knew what she was talking about and she reduced them all to tears. She took an extreme case, she owns — and gave the agricultural labourer more children than he need have had, and nearer together than necessary, but she says if she had n't done that, they would have gone on thinking a man can live on sixteen shillings a week, and a Christmas tree — and save for an old age — a happy old age. To cheer the ladies up she popped the children into white night-gowns and had them in rows saying their prayers by eight o'clock. It weakened her point, but she said no one noticed that, they were so relieved the night-gowns were white. The next subject is "England in Egypt." I found Milly with Milner's book in bed at half-past twelve last night. I am afraid she'll know more about that subject than any one. She's mad about the Nile — dreams of it — and Milner does make it romance, does n't he? She is the greatest comfort to me and her success in social work is really astounding. She has a most wonderful influence over the girls she meets at the Training Homes to which she goes with Lady Agnes. She tells them all about birds. She applies the lessons in the most wonderful way. It is marvellous what birds can do. Look what they've done for her.

Yours, ELIZABETH.

P.S. Personally, I think it was the birds did it, not the goats. I hope you won't think I am prejudiced about Milly.

Joanna smiled as she folded the letter and, replacing it in the envelope, put it in her pocket and

leant with her arms on the top of the gate. The scene she looked upon was familiar to her. Every cottage and farmhouse nestling enfolded in the shadow of the hills, she knew. In the one was a woman she was devoted to; in the other, a child she loved; in another, an old man who amused her; in yet another, a young man whom she advised and who in return gave her advice on how to influence him for good. It was no use, he would say, speaking to him firmly. It was sympathy he wanted, and Joanna, knowing quite well that those who ask for sympathy are just those who need it the least, dealt with him according to her own humour, and liked him much better than he knew — or she knew. In every cottage and farm there were people she liked. In every tree there must be birds — those she loved too. In every wood there were animals. As she looked she thought of Milly — of her return to the home of Mrs. Don — and then she thought of Hope. Would she come back as simply as Milly had come? Joanna thought she would in all probability put on her best clothes and her best manners, thinking to overawe John and Joanna, and she smiled to think how difficult it would be to impress Daddy John, who would look far deeper than clothes and would certainly find in Hope something of the child he had loved. He always surprised people by the good he found in them. Very often it was not the good they expected him to find: but rather some hidden good of which they were unconscious.

While Joanna leant on the gate thinking these things, she heard a step, and turned to find Milly beside her.

"Is n't it lovely?" said the girl, drinking in the beauty of a scene that must have been familiar to her ever since she remembered anything. There must have been a time when she had stood and looked between the bottom bars of the gate on to a veritable forest of pink vetch.

"Have you anything to say?" asked Joanna, and Milly answered "Yes," and she paused. Joanna asked her gently what it was she wanted to say.

"Mother — says you have something to tell me. What is it, please?"

Joanna was silent. She looked at the piles of white clouds — at the blue sky — at the woods and the green slopes — and wondered how she should tell Milly, and what she should tell her. She knew nothing except that Milly was not the Dons' child. "Have you ever felt a longing for a life different from the one you led here? Now, of course, you are leading a different life: but before that — did you ever feel you wanted something more?"

"How do you mean?" asked Milly.

And Joanna answered: "I mean exactly what I say — did your life here satisfy you?"

"Does it satisfy any one?" asked Milly.

Joanna thought for a moment; then said: "Yes, I think — it does — certainly. I believe there are hundreds of girls satisfied to live as their mothers

lived before them — or if they want more, it is only to go to a town where they can have fun and pretty clothes — and see other girls and men. Was that the life you wanted?"

Milly peeled the lichen from the gate-post and hesitated to speak.

"Tell me, Milly."

And Milly said slowly: "I wanted to go away — but not to the next town and not to buy finery — or to have a good time. I wanted that, perhaps; but what I wanted was to travel — I wanted to go miles and miles away. I wanted to see mountains and lakes and deserts and volcanoes — and flying fish — and whales — and giraffes and elephants. I wanted to bathe in warm seas — and pick armfuls of glorious flowers and eat strange fruits and see strange people. I wanted to see the country of the Bible — I wanted to see myriads of stars — and to be alone in great places. I wanted to see birds and beasts. I wanted to wear the rainbow — and chase the clouds — and play with the lightning and watch storms. I did n't know all I wanted until I lived with Miss Column, and now I know. I've read dozens of books since I've been with her and I've been to lectures — and I've seen pictures and I've heard things —"

"And you could come back to the Dons' cottage?"

Milly hesitated. "Don't ask me," she said.

"But it's what I want to ask you, what I want to know."

"If — some day, when I 've seen everything and done everything and been everywhere — and I 'm tired and old — then I think I should like to come back. Mother is very good when you 're tired."

"But if you were worn out and old, your mother would not be likely to be here. What will the world seem to you without your mother?"

Joanna watched the girl's face — it was puzzled, unhappy, ashamed. "Perhaps," said Milly, "I am not like other girls —"

"You think some girls love their mother more than you love yours?"

"She 's been very good to me."

"Yes, a woman might be that and yet be not quite like a mother. Have you ever thought what mother you would have chosen—if you could have chosen?"

"I would n't say if I had," said the girl, hurt by Joanna's persistence.

Joanna, seeing it, laid her hand on Milly's arm. "Milly," she said, "Mrs. Don is not your mother. This does not detract from her goodness. You owe more to her than you would have done to your own mother, because she has done for you of her free will what a mother must have done."

"Who was my mother?"

"I don't know — nobody knows."

"And my father?"

Joanna shook her head.

They were silent — then Milly said: "I 'm going

home to help Mother — wash — she feels her back. She never used to —"

And Joanna was left alone. "Dear, dear child," she said.

The smoke rose from the chimneys of the farm-houses, in thin, blue, unwavering lines. There was the soft rustling of living things in the hedges. It was a very quiet world and a very beautiful world — a sad world — a happy world — and a world where things happened — unexpected things. A young man was passing. He stopped and asked Joanna the way to Up and Down. He addressed her as his good woman, and Joanna, knowing herself to be not much worse than most and little better than some, resented not at all his manner of speech, since she could not by any possibility of means be his.

She smiled when he begged her pardon. "And why?" she asked, "do you find me less good than you at first thought me?"

He hastily assured her; not less good, but more accessible than most good women. Joanna thought a second, then suggested that women needed, perhaps, the assurance that they were good. To speak to them without that assurance rather suggested they were — not so good. The young man said he would remember, that in addressing all women he must acclaim their goodness.

"There is good in most of them," said Joanna; "if you persist it is there."

"Some good," agreed the young man.

"More than men know," protested Joanna.

"More than we know," again agreed the young man. He was amenable. "And you live here?" he asked.

And Joanna in her turn asked him, why he should think so. Were her ways the ways of a country woman? Did her shoes — chumpy shoes they were — give her away, or her voice betray her?

And he said she had an air of quiet proprietorship. As he had borne down upon her, he had seen her smiling at the grass, encouraging it. No one — no stranger — would take the interest she took in the smallest effort made by the smallest flower to grow again that had grown before. "You look for a certain flower here — that grew by the gate last year, and the year before that, and the year before that even — a flower that a stranger would not look for — nor miss when he found it not."

"You are right," said Joanna, stooping; "there were violets here last year and the year before and the year before that — perhaps — they are not here this year." And she stooped closer — parting the grasses the better to see.

"You will muddy your skirt," said the young man.

"Mud will brush off," said Joanna.

"Your hat is — not quite straight. Does it distress you?"

"Not in the least."

"There is perhaps — who knows? — a hiatus be-

tween your petersham and your skirt. Do you mind that?"

This surprised Joanna — a little, not much. "Even that," she said, "I can bear."

"Then, Jomammy, — show me the way to Up and Down, for by all the gods I worship — and that is but one — yours — I want more than anything to see you and Daddy John — and Up and Down — and the regenerating goats —"

"I thought so," said Joanna, rising from her knees. "I knew you — guessed it was you directly I saw you —"

"Why — how?"

"By your exquisite manners — by your quick presumption of my grace and goodness — and because Hope has described you. I know no young man with a tie tied as yours is tied. In Up and Down such things do not happen. It would not be Up and Down if they did. Now, tell me about Hope."

The young man said he was hungry: Hope could wait. Would Mrs. Templar share his luncheon? And Mrs. Templar, hearing there was a biscuit or two too many, was willing enough. She said she loved the unexpected.

"And potted meat?" he asked.

"No — not particularly — why?"

"I wondered — What do you like?"

"The unexpected."

She had expected Irish stew and John, and here was — what? She peeped over the young man's

shoulder as he undid the packet, taken from his coat pocket — almonds and raisins — a ginger-bread squirrel — that he explained was his birthday present, sent him by an old governess. She never forgot — it travelled so well that the tail even was intact.

"How far has it travelled?"

"Switzerland" — and there were, besides the ginger-bread squirrel, sandwiches.

Here were almonds and adventure. The sandwiches should be her host's. The biscuits, almonds, and raisins — and the squirrel — they would share. Joanna pronounced it 'gollygoptious' — a word she could not have spelt. He was delighted. They sat down under the hedge. It was not very wet, nor was it very dry, but it was delightful, and Joanna learned in ten minutes more of Willing Manners than Hope could have told her after ten years. And when their meal was finished, and the crumbs shaken from the skirt of Joanna and the paper tidily buried, Joanna returned to Hope, and as they walked, Willing told her about Hope and her new parents and her new world. It was a wonderfully tidy and well-ordered world! And it was a perfectly round world. Her parents were round; their butler was round; the common task, the daily round was theirs; everything was round and smooth. Hope was clinging to a round world — there was very little to catch hold of. There was in it not much that was beautiful and there was much that was hideous. There was nothing hideous that Mr. Blent could not afford to buy

— dealers knew that Mr. Blent was a dumping-ground for expensive things that were valueless except for what they cost. Hope had become very expensive. She was also in her conventional way almost beautiful, but she lacked — "Of course you know what it is she lacks," said the young man.

And Joanna objected to this. The young man might call her good if he liked; but he must not abuse Hope. She reminded him that Hope was her child, whatever the Blents might feel.

"Yes, yes, but how could she live with you," he asked, "and —?"

"Be so tidy?" asked Joanna.

"Well, yes, in body and mind."

"Because she was the Blents' child, I suppose. If ever you adopt a child you will find that whatever you may do for that child, that child will be yours just so long as she believes herself to be yours. When she knows she is not yours — she will discover a duty towards the parents who felt little towards her."

"I had not thought of adopting a child," said Manners seriously; "it's an idea — thank you: if Hope won't marry me —"

"Marry you?" asked Joanna in astonishment. "Is that what you came down here for?"

"No, a thousand times, no. I never thought of marrying her when I took my ticket for Up and Down this morning. I had thought of it before —

sometimes — When she acted infamously I thought to marry her in order to save her from herself — and save any audience — possible audiences, from her — and to save her from possible audiences; but that feeling passed. I had not thought of marrying her until I saw you: the sight of you made me feel that some little part of you — and some attributes of yours — must be hers. She could not have lived with you without becoming something like you and I would marry her and worship just that side of her character that might be yours. Perhaps once a week — on Sundays — or on festival days, appointed by the Church to be observed, she might be like you. The church bells might do it. Then Sunday would be my day of days. Now, it means to me — sausages for breakfast — as it does to hundreds and thousands of young men — and people generally."

"You are an absurd young man," said Joanna.

"How kind of you to feel that. Perhaps the sight of Up and Down has upset me. Hope has told me so much about you."

"Has she?" asked Joanna, pleased.

"She has. She did n't, perhaps, know how attractive she made you. She is a little jealous for — not of — your untidiness. She seemed afraid I should imagine you like Mrs. Blent."

At this moment Joanna and her strange guest were passing Mrs. Don's cottage, and the door of the cottage stood open and Milly up to her elbows in soapsuds was at the wash-tub. She looked up as

Mrs. Templar passed. A coil of her hair had fallen over her shoulder. She threw it back and smiled at Joanna.

The young man stood still and looked at Milly. "What an extraordinary thing!" he said.

"What? a girl washing? I can assure you it's an everyday sight in Up and Down. We may be untidy, but we are clean."

"No, no, wait — she's the living image of a girl I saw the other day in London."

"We believe in Up and Down that there is no one quite like her," said Joanna.

"May I speak to her?" he asked.

"No," said Joanna; "she has no need to be assured of her goodness. Come and see the church: it is very old and good, and the Vicar, not so old, but just as good. They are both well worth seeing. Neither of them talk much. The church will perhaps say more to you than will the Vicar. It is wiser, of course, but they both stand for and mean the same thing."

"I sketch," said Manners.

"Do you?" said Joanna. "We all wish to at some time or other."

"That cottage we passed would make a charming subject."

"Charming," said Joanna, "with its thatched roof —"

"Yes," said the young man eagerly, — "thatched roof — that's what I meant."

"And its quaint chimney?"

"Yes, yes, the light was just right — the sun kissing the chimney."

"Yes, the chimney — it's accustomed to being kissed."

"But it blushes —"

"It's accustomed to that too. It's expected of it — artists make it blush, in every conceivable shade of colour."

"Will you forgive me if I — ?"

"Never!" said Joanna. "The creepers over the cottage — the garden — the uneven bricks of the pathway up to the door — it's all charming — you can paint it when you get home — it's all charming —" As she spoke she opened the gate leading into the vicarage garden. "You must first see the Vicar — it was Daddy John, you will remember, you came to see."

But it was Milly he had seen, thought Manners. The gate was shut behind him, and the young man was obliged to be introduced to the Vicar, although his heart was in Mrs. Don's cottage.

"John," said Joanna, "here is Mr. Manners, Hope's friend. I am going to leave you together for a few minutes — John, are you listening?"

John was listening. Into his hand Joanna slipped a well-worn, slim, leather-bound book. "Job, John," she whispered and was gone.

"So this is Daddy John," thought Manners as he sat opposite the Vicar. His face Manners found charming, his expression whimsical. In his eyes

there was humour, kindliness in his smile. He must have found Hope trying. Hope may have found him impossible. She would.

"You have a charming place here, sir," said Manners easily, crossing his legs as he spoke and tossing back his head, so rearranging his somewhat dishevelled hair.

"Charming, charming," said the Vicar; "you are a poet, Mr. Manners, I see?"

Mr. Manners, immensely gratified, wondered how Mr. Templar knew that. He had only spoken two or three words.

"Your tie — there is poetical licence in its looseness — is there not? — artistry in its bow — abandon in its colour — and your hair? Yes, the modern poet proclaims his art by his clothes and his manners. In what way and in what manner did Job proclaim his? There are few poems greater than his, yet I doubt that he wore a tie, or if he did that he tied it in any way differently from the way his friends tied theirs. You know your Job, of course?" And Daddy John opened the slim volume Joanna had slipped into his hand and began in his golden voice to read from it.

At first Manners was interested: the beauty of the reading was not lost upon him, however untimely the reading might prove. That John would read a few lines and a few lines only, of course he knew. It is a weakness common to those who can read aloud well to read often — aloud. The Vicar would read

some passages he loved — no more. To read at all at such a moment was a pose: but to Manners poses were natural. They were even a refuge in times of social difficulties. He had read sonnets at moments most inopportune; to hungry guests — to girls expecting proposals.

But the Vicar read on, his voice rising and falling — the words rolling out in glorious cadences. Manners knew it to be magnificent, if tedious. His heart was not in Job, but in the cottage of Mrs. Don, where true loveliness was to be found. He looked out of the window, on to the lawn, marvelled at its greenness (it wanted mowing, of course). There were too many daisies. The absurd — prettily absurd — gait of a grey wagtail amused him. It was all charmingly rural — outdoors. Indoors it was warm — a wood fire burned on the hearth. Through the windows he could see the pale, warm sun of spring-time — warm, but not too warm. He was too warm — he grew sleepy — farther and farther away sounded the voice of the Vicar — Manners slept. He awoke at intervals to Hope —

"Thy hope and the uprightness of thy ways," were the words he heard when he awoke. Hope was not his — nor were his ways upright — the dear old man was wrong, Job was wrong — the whole bally lot were wrong — and so to sleep again — but to wake to the words:

> "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle
> And are spent without hope."

It was exactly as he wanted his days spent — and again he slept.

> "And the hypocrite's hope shall perish
> Whose hope shall be cut off."
>
> . . . .
>
> "Thou shalt be as the morning
> And thou shalt be secure,
> Because there is no hope."

He tried to say there was no hope, and heard again:

> "For there is hope of a tree if it be cut down
> That it will sprout again."
>
> . . . .
>
> "And mine hope hath he removed like a tree."

And with hope finally removed from him Manners slept happily without hope. Never was child by mother lulled to sleep more gently than was Manners by Daddy John, who read on glorying in the beauty of Job. It was truly magnificent. His voice neither faltered nor failed. To Manners he was entirely oblivious. It was not until Joanna laid her hand on his shoulder that he too 'awoke.'

"My dear," he said, "have I been reading long?"

"Quite long enough; two hours or thereabouts."

"Wake him up, that young man," said John.

And Joanna, bending forward, laid her hand on Manners's shoulder. "John has something he wishes to read to you," she said —

How dared she? thought Manners. What had the old man done but read?

"Listen!" said John.

"Oh, that my words were now written!
Oh, that they were printed in a book!
That they were graven
With an iron pen and lead
In the rock for ever!
For I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And that he shall stand at the latter day
Upon the earth;
And though after my skin
Worms destroy this body,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold
And not another —"

"Forgive me, sir," said Manners, "it's immense, but I have heard it before — I know it — I am afraid it is getting late — it must be tea-time."

"Supper will soon be ready," said Joanna, gently. "We hope you will stay."

"But I must get back to-night."

"You shall: there is a nine o'clock train."

"But —"

"The six-thirty has gone," said Joanna; "it was a few minutes early in starting — or our clocks may be wrong — they are," she said, consulting her watch in John's pocket. "I thought the station time was not ours."

After supper Joanna walked to the station with a very unhappy and discomfited young man. He looked at the picturesque cottage as they passed it, but darkness filled the doorway. A girl was drawing water from the well — a plain girl — a good girl,

no doubt. A drawer of water and a hewer of wood, but no beauty. Joanna called "Good-night" to her as she passed, careful not to ask where she had got the blue ribbon that bound her hair.

When Joanna got back to John she said: "You did well, my John. You could n't have done better — here is a lozenge. I knew we should some day put your reading of Job to good use."

"I read it with all seriousness — you know that — with all reverence."

Of course it was not Joanna's invention (as children say), the prolonged reading aloud of Job. Thomas Carlyle was before her — but his purpose had not been hers. While Carlyle read, a good breakfast was lost. While John read, a good girl was saved. How far-reaching is the influence of the writer — how far away the voice of the reader — how deep the sleep of the listener, who wakes but to hope again. Joanna for all her understanding misdoubted long-haired men — short-haired women — dishevelment in men — over-tidiness in women. It meant with both over-attention to detail. As a matter of fact, Willing Manners would have removed a fly from a kitten's saucer of milk, otherwise leaving the milk untouched — and the fly unhurt. He might even help the fly to dry itself — he might. He had only wanted to look at Milly and to thank her for being what she was. Joanna's manner of thanksgiving was a better one. Of any other Elizabeth disapproved.

XXII

Hope had been to more than one play with Paul Blunt. She was happy, happier than she had ever been. She said to herself, deceiving herself, that it was Hammy who had made her life so different from what it had been.

"Why do you call me darling?" he asked, "when you don't do the things I like?"

"What things do you like?"

"Sailing boats in the Round Pond — and — playing horses and pretending things."

Hope was always pretending things, but she could not tell Hammy so, because his pretending was not hers nor hers his, so she chose to like the Round Pond for Hammy's sake. Why did he like it? Because it was round?

Hammy pondered over this, — because it was round? No, that was n't it — exactly. Because you did jolly things on it — and there were ducks and drakes, but steamboats and sailing-boats were best.

"Why do you like sailing-boats?"

"We-ell," said Hammy, "because I do — and Cousin Paul is there and he likes them and he says, 'By Jove — she'll do it!'"

"Do what, darling?" asked Hope, warming towards the Round Pond and the boats that sailed thereon.

"Why, win, of course."

Cousin Paul went to the Round Pond; for that reason it must be delightful; therefore Hope said: "I will come, Jammy."

"Faithfully promise?"

"Faithfully."

"On your dying oath?"

"Yes, yes."

"Next Sunday?"

"Next Sunday."

"Good," said Hammy; "Cousin Paul won't be there next Sunday — he said not."

But for what might some day be Hope was prepared;— to put up with a Sunday and the Round Pond with Hammy alone. She went with him. She talked to him gaily; to impress the passer-by rather than to please Hammy. More than one man turned to look at her. A girl with a child is an appealing picture always to some men. "A nice natural girl — what a mother she would make," thought more than one. "How few girls are happy amusing a small boy." And a little rush of appreciation of good women in general would possess their gentle souls.

Hope watched the boats. She honestly tried to be amused. She was interested only in wondering what could be interesting to a grown man in this extremely juvenile amusement. Hammy was beside himself with excitement. "Cousin Paul asked why you did n't come," he said.

"When did he ask?"

"Always — all the time, nearly."

"Why did n't you tell me, Hammy?"

"Oh, I don't know — let's run." And Hope ran even — thereby gaining the right of Hammy's companionship on other Sundays. And when she had been running a long time and was hot and dishevelled — she thought she was dishevelled — she saw Paul coming towards her and he was laughing as he came.

Hammy rushed at him. "You said you were n't — did n't you? — you did. You said you were n't coming and I told Hope you were n't."

"And that is why she came: is that it?"

Hope could not say she had come once so that she might come again. So she said nothing, and put her trust in her hair that was blown about. Paul liked it blown about and he looked at her as he had never looked before. He was thinking that it was exercise she wanted, enthusiasm, unselfishness. Hope would have been disappointed if she had known he was thinking that. She took an enormous interest in the boats — wishing Paul took less — wishing Hammy at the ends of the earth. But Sunday morning was Hammy's own while Paul was in England. He had promised Sunday mornings to Hammy unless something very important should happen.

"Like what?" asked Hammy, jealous of his own.

"If my mother was ill and wanted me."

"Mothers are n't ever ill," said Hammy complacently. "Like what else?" he asked.

"How do you mean?"

"What else might happen to make you not come?"

"Oh, well, lots of things."

"Nice things?"

"Some might be nice."

"Like" — Hammy paused to make a good choice of possible chances — "being married?"

"Yes," said Paul Blunt.

"Or — divorced?" said Hammy, gaining confidence.

"That's not a good thing to be, old man."

"But people can be, can't they?"

"They can, but it's not a good thing."

"Why is n't it?"

"Well, it's very expensive — and it's a bother."

"But," argued Hammy, — he loved an argument, — "but supposin' after you married your wife was n't nice company?"

"That, of course, would be very unfortunate."

"So — I suppose," said Hammy thoughtfully, "that people must be very careful what people they marry."

"Very careful."

"Oh!" Food for thought here.

Paul looked at Hope, possibly wondering, she thought, if she would be nice company after marriage. She smiled at him, then looked quickly away, which feint he did not see nor did he return the attack; but returned instead to deep arguing with Hammy; and Hope, looking to see if he had under-

stood, found him in complete understanding with Hammy. She was left outside. She might as well have been at the bottom of the Round Pond and the Round Pond — square, for all they cared; either of them.

Paul came back to luncheon. There was that to thank Hammy for, but Miss Broser monopolised him. She also recommended a play — went so far as to say Hope must see it and Paul must take her to see it. For which Hope blessed Miss Broser and Miss Broser, knowing herself blessed, was glad. She sighted romance, and romance was to her as the warmth of a burning fire to one perishing of cold. She could not live without it; perhaps because with her it had nothing to do. It had never directly lightened her ways with the glory of its glowing. She had lighted a little lantern of her own from the sparks of its fire, burning for others. She had fostered the pale, stolen flame till it burned brightly — twin fires in her eyes, and passers-by would say of her, "There goes a woman who has known romance in her life," not guessing it was of her own lighting from the fires burning for others. Now she saw the flame in the eyes of Hope and wondered if Paul would catch fire. If he did not catch fire, he may have been scorched as he sat beside Hope at the play of Miss Broser's choosing. There was in the play the magic of romance, and like all just men Paul was at heart romantic, and it seemed to him somehow good that he should be sitting beside a woman

he liked, who laughed when he laughed, said, at all events, that her eyes were filled with tears when his were; who was fresh and clean and wholesome and easily amused and fond of Hammy; who said charming things about Joanna and omitted to say anything that was not charming about her new parents. This was to her credit, and Paul liked her. He had not told her so; but women jump readily to conclusions. There are no gaps so wide that they cannot jump them when they are in love, no fence they cannot negotiate if they want to. And over the fence of Paul's cautious reserve she climbed, and landed in the deep ditch of his doubts on the other side. Almost had she persuaded him to pull her out of the ditch, on to the dry, hard, safe ground — almost —

As they went out of the theatre their hearts were softened — as hearts are softened after a play — towards a world in which there is after all nothing like love. It lies with the playwright, the power to make the world in which we live a good world or a bad one. Through the swing-door of the playhouse we go out into a world which, for that night at all events, is of his making. For the feelings of the next morning he is not responsible. It was a wonderful world into which Hope and Paul were going that night, wonderful for Hope. He went a few steps in front of her, she following closely so as not to lose sight of him for a moment. She would like all the world to see that she and he were together. There was no other man in the theatre with whom she

would have wished to be; no other man with whom she would have wished people to see her. She was glad he was so good to look at. It was her hour. She triumphed. Then Paul stopped and looked at some one. Hope's eyes followed his. She saw, as he did, a girl whose beauty was like that of a wild-flower in spring-time, exquisite in its delicacy. And Hope felt like a candle blown out by a gust of wind — a wind, soft and delicious, a wind that blows across fields of fragrant flowers, a happy, frolicking wind. It blew away, like a cloud, the world of a playwright's making and extinguished Hope. To a candle it must be an ill wind that blows it out. There can be nothing of so little importance in the world as an extinguished candle; be it

Whitehall sperm,
Vegetable Wax,
Spermaceti,
Paraffin (self-fitting),
Composite (plain ends),
or
Snuffless Dip.

XXIII

After that night at the play an overwhelming desire possessed Hope to see Joanna — just as strong an impulse was it as Milly's had been to see Mrs. Don. Hope wanted comforting badly. And Joanna's silent sympathy was what she needed. When she told Mrs. Blent she must go and see Joanna, Mrs. Blent said she had been expecting her to say so: had wondered she had not wished to do so before — "Because, after all, dear, she was very kind to you — according to her lights."

Hope did not wish to be told this by any one: least of all by her mother. It is quite impossible, she argued to herself, that one mother can understand another; especially if one is real and never feels what a mother should feel, and the other not real, but feeling all that a mother can feel. Hope was annoyed with her real, unreal mother for being fat and complacent and dressy. She longed for the breezes of Up and Down. "I shall go," she said; and Mrs. Blent returned, "I shall go with you. It is my duty, as your mother, to thank Mrs. Templar for what she did for you — as your adopted mother."

Hope had not the slightest wish to go to Up and Down escorted by a grateful mother, nor did she want Jomammy hurt by being thanked. But what

Mrs. Blent said she would do she invariably did, and on a summer's day there went out from London two women, bound for the village of Up and Down.

The journey was uneventful, except that Mrs. Blent was silent most of the way. She was rehearsing in her mind what she should say to Joanna? To John? Should she kiss Joanna, and take John by both hands (he was n't quite like an ordinary clergyman, he had private means), or should she take Joanna by both hands — and John by one? With a gentle pressure rather than a squeeze?

As the train was going through a tunnel she asked Hope if she thought Joanna would expect to be kissed. Hope said she had no idea: but that John would kiss Mrs. Blent was a foregone conclusion.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Blent. Then after a pause, she added: "I may be stout and all that — but I still remember what is due to your father. Even as an old woman I shall not allow it — never."

"There will be no question of allowing it. If it is Daddy John's custom to kiss at a certain hour, and you, at that hour, are at hand, you will be kissed."

"My dear child, I must say once more that they are most extraordinary people."

"Impossible, of course," said Hope, "but they are the kind of people —"

"What, dear? I wish you were less reserved. Your right sleeve pulls a little — I know they are

not quite the kind of people one would choose to know."

"But they are — everybody wants to know them — and everybody loves them."

"Well, then, *what* is it?"

Hope relapsed into a gloomy silence. Mrs. Blent sighed. "The country *is* pretty," she thought, as she looked out of the window. "It is nice that poor people should have it for bank holidays and all that." She wished Father liked it. If he had liked it, they might have had a country house near town — quite near, so that they could go up every day, if they wanted to, so as not to lose touch. The parks in London were wonderfully nice — quite like the country — the trees were. To look at — not to touch — quite like enough. Then there was Ranelagh — and cro—quet — for those who cro—quetted. She was asleep and Hope looked at her. At her golden hair — too golden — too curled. At her face — too pink — too round. At her nose, in particular, too insignificant. At her hat, too hatty. At her dress, too dressy. At her hands, too tightly gloved. At her boots, too pointed. But the Railway Company is not so particular as Hope. So long as the passenger pays it will carry any one anywhere and in spite of her physical and mental deficiencies it conveyed Mrs. Blent, without accident, to the station at which one must alight if one would reach Up and Down. If not there are other stations to choose from.

Mrs. Blent had got into the house and out again unkissed by John. He was consideration itself, she thought. He expressed the greatest pleasure at seeing her. Hope and Joanna disappeared. To see the goats, Mrs. Blent supposed. She was left with John. She was a little nervous of being kissed, and when he tried to take a caterpillar from her shoulder she begged him to remember his position. He had only thought of the caterpillar's. He showed her the garden, the village, and the church. She said the church was sweetly pretty and so old.

Yes, he agreed, it was old. The interior was particularly beautiful. She must see it. In the steeple, she learned, was aspiration — ever aspiring upwards — heavenwards! Did she like the idea? She said she did, but was glad to pass from the sight of perpetual aspiration into the coolness of the church. There were two old women at prayer, and one little girl, with her hair in a number of tight, straw-coloured plaits, which sprang, like the spokes of a wheel, from her bended head. "Dear Phœbe," said John, laying his hand on the funny little hub of a head.

"Is it a service?" asked Mrs. Blent, hoping the offices of John might be required — and that quickly.

"No," whispered John, "it's a mother's day. Nearly every day is mother's day to some one. It is Joanna's idea — people come on their mother's birthdays — and just thank God for their mothers. It's an idea of Joanna's. The people come."

"Every one has a mother or has had one," said Mrs. Blent, greatly venturing. Then, having nothing more to say, she was grateful for the enforced silence until, the force of a coincidence striking her, she whispered: "It's my mother's birthday to-day; I had forgotten it."

"Ah, then stay here. I will leave you. Joanna will be so pleased." And John went out — followed in a few minutes by the little girl, and then by the two old women.

"How long ago must it be since they had mothers alive?" wondered Mrs. Blent.

Then she found herself alone.

It was the first time in her life she had been alone — with God. She felt Him everywhere — to her great discomfort and embarrassment. She did not know what to do, or what to say. Of course she had prayed in church over and over again: but she had been surrounded by friends — and people she knew by sight; and whose hats and coats were familiar. She had said her prayers in her bedroom, but she had prayed to a God in Heaven, not to a God at her elbow.

Could it be that in stillness was God? — in quietness was God? Had her life been too noisy — too crowded? — Her mother? Poor dear soul! Mrs. Blent had no wish to think about her. She had not been in that station of life in which she would have expected to be thought of. She had said: "Don't bother about me, Hatty child, you're a swell now."

Then in the stillness of the church little things about her mother crept back into the mind and heart of Harriet Blent. She remembered — a cut finger, bound up by her mother and kissed to make it well. She remembered — the tender supplement of winkles for tea. She remembered — being ill and her mother, in the night, lifting her in bed and arranging the pillow. She remembered — her mother telling her she must never, never say things against Dad — he was worried, not cross, mind! worn out, not in a temper; tired — not drunk.

Mrs. Blent in the stillness of the church could n't shut her ears to the remembered sound of that word as her mother had used it. She had never told any one. It was a comfort to admit it now to One who knew. God must know all about it. She remembered, at the time of her marriage to Mr. Blent, her mother's delight. She remembered the clothes she had made her — out of nothing. She remembered the little money her mother had saved and given her so that she should n't be entirely beholden to young Blent.

Then she remembered — that as she had got better off she had seen less of her mother — as she had grown rich — nothing. She had sent her money, of course — and later on an enormous wreath — and had paid for a cross in marble — eight feet high. Her mother had been five feet one. The cross would be two feet eleven inches higher than her mother herself, and no doubt her mother had grown

smaller with age — so she might say three feet higher. "Oh" — and Mrs. Blent, alone in the little church of Up and Down, called upon God, and, finding Him there, was no longer afraid — but ashamed — ashamed, more than anything of crying. What would people think?

Joanna thought nothing of it. She had seen many women crying on their mothers' days, and tears were not always for unhappiness — she knew.

"I thought you might not know the way back, so I came."

Mrs. Blent said she had n't been sure of the way. "It's my poor mother's birthday," she added.

"How curious!" said Joanna. "It's Mrs. Hazel's birthday too, Phœbe's mother."

"Is she dead?" asked Mrs. Blent, feeling softened towards a motherless child — wondering who had plaited her hair so tightly if it was not a mother.

"Oh, no," said Joanna, "but Phœbe adores her mother: another baby is expected and she leaves nothing to chance, poor mite!"

"She was a very good woman, my mother," said Mrs. Blent, wondering if she could powder her nose without Joanna seeing her do it.

Joanna nodded.

Mrs. Blent was not sure she was having what could be called a happy day in the country. As she walked back to the vicarage with Joanna, she felt softened but aggrieved: aggrieved that she was softened. It meant that she might have uncomfortable

moments when she got home again. There she would not find the peace there had been in Up and Down. On the other hand, there would be no uncomfortable quietness. God must be back in heaven. It was Hammy's birthday soon and he would be asking for things. And it was the only address he knew.

"I feel," said Mrs. Blent to Joanna, "that I cannot thank you enough for all you did for my Hatty — my Hope, I mean."

"Please, please," said Joanna.

"But I must." She paused. She must, but she could n't. Mrs. Templar might have helped her — might at least have said it had been no trouble — or that the trouble was a pleasure. Mrs. Blent liked the obvious thing said. She was at home with those who said it. But Joanna said nothing: only quickened her pace, to the great discomfort of Mrs. Blent, whose pace was not her strength. Up the village sprinted Joanna, followed by Mrs. Blent.

"There go the two mothers," said Widow Waysey, looking out of her window. "Mrs. Templar wins by a long way — that she do."

"And she did ought," said Widow Waysey's friend.

"She's thin she is — and the other, she's fattish, ain't she?"

"I was speakin' in parables," said Widow Waysey's friend.

"Oh, were you?" said Widow Waysey; "then

speak sense and say what you mean — a parable's jam to the truth powder."

"I meant no harm — I meant that Mrs. Templar's the best mother of them two."

"No parable needed to tell the simple truth," said Widow Waysey.

"Seen old Job Salting of late years?" asked the friend, with malice intent.

"Yes — saw him go into the 'Dog and Duck' last night with your old man."

"That you did n't — my old man was in bed and snorin' by eight."

"I was speakin' in probables," said Widow Waysey, chuckling. She had known a worse joke than that.

At luncheon Mrs. Blent noticed how happy Hope looked. It could not be the food she was enjoying. Of course Mrs. Blent was hungry or she could not have eaten so much. If you are hungry you must eat. She was hungry and happy, considering the rather serious time she had spent in church on a week-day. It had been a strain on her emotions to-day.

"This is your grandmother's birthday, Hope," she said; "Grannie's birthday."

It sounded so well. She wondered she had not mentioned Hope's grannie before.

Hope, bewildered, looked from her real mother to Joanna, from Joanna to John. Whose mother was her grandmother?

"I have never heard of her, never realised I had one," she said.

"Yes, dear, my mother — it is her birthday, and, finding a charming custom here — mothers' day — I was very glad to be allowed —"

"Who was she?" asked Hope.

"My mother, dear. Shall we talk of something else? It has upset me a little."

They talked of something else — of everything else — and Hope's grannie sank into the oblivion from which she had emerged, just for a few minutes on a beautiful summer's day in Up and Down. The best of everything and every one came out in Up and Down.

Mrs. Blent must see the goats. She saw them and found them — like the church — sweetly pretty — but —

"Oh, no, not often," said Joanna absent-mindedly; "and then they butt in fun!"

"Oh," said Mrs. Blent, "I see; but I want to see everything."

Everything must include Martha. Martha did n't hold with being seen and she was n't in the least pleased when Mrs. Blent thanked her for being good to Miss Hatty.

"And who's that?" asked Martha. She had n't been kind, never was.

Mrs. Blent admired her coppers. Took one from the dresser and found it dented; — but so well kept.

"Nothin' dented, nothin' have, in this house," said Martha.

A look from Joanna, and Martha softened. "It's my duty I did, ma'am, if I did anything."

"England expects — no man to do more than that," said Mrs. Blent, not sure that she had said what she had meant to say.

John found the day long. It was long, the longest of the whole year, Joanna reminded him when it was over. But during the day he had not thought to account for it so naturally. At three o'clock it was suggested by Hope that her mother might like to see Up and Down Park.

It proved the one thing she wished to see. "As I know Lady Agnes, it seems unnatural not to know her beautiful home. It's awkward to talk about it without knowing it."

John suggested walking there. Joanna's eyes strayed to the pointed toes of Mrs. Blent's boots.

Hope, catching her look, nodded.

"She does n't walk much," she said.

"No occasion to, dear," said her mother.

Joanna had an idea. There was the sound of wheels on the gravel — a cart at the back door. She was off to see, and came back to say Solomon Slow was there and would drive Mrs. Blent to the Park. He was going there. Mrs. Blent brightened. Mischief danced in the eyes of Hope. She was on the side of the angels to-day, with a vengeance. Never had she imagined she would live to glory in the impos-

sibility of John and Joanna. Even their impossibility was refreshing after the months she had spent with the Blents; but sobering, she reminded herself that it was June in Up and Down, and anywhere in June is better than any other place in the world — so long as it is country. To be perfectly happy one must be in the country in June. But in the winter when the wind howls up and down the valley and moans round the house — raising the devil — London!

Mrs. Blent was delighted at the prospect of driving. She loved it. She had several pretty things to say about driving through leafy lanes and country roads. If asked she would have confessed she had got them out of a birthday book. While she was saying them she was following Joanna, and, having followed her round the house, she came upon Solomon in all his glory, and his glory consisted of his cart and his treasure, the loaves within it. For Solomon with all his slowness was before all things a baker, and as a baker, and nothing else, was he going to the Park. But he had room for a lady, if the lady did n't mind. Bread came first with him, a long way before women. It was the staff of life — women were the cross.

The lady did mind, but she could n't say so. It was all too extraordinary, this day of all days — her mother's birthday — that she should be driving in a baker's cart. No one knew what an extraordinary thing it was. If she had not felt so deeply religious

a few hours before, she might have taken some strong steps to avert this indignity that had been thrust before her, but after what had happened — the reunion as it were with her mother — how could she deny the baker part of the business? It was her secret. No one knew it, except Father, and he would never tell.

Into the cart she climbed and sat beside Slow. The smell of the new bread brought back to her mind a thousand memories. She held on tightly to the rail under her left hand — and yearned for a bit of new crust — she could take it from where it least showed. It was years since she had been bumped as she was bumped now.

"It is a rough road," she said to Slow — but Slow made no sign of hearing. He seemed to choose a deeper rut to drive in. Mrs. Blent repeated that it was a rough road, and again he made no reply. He stopped at a cottage door and pointed to a basket in the back of the cart and held up his first finger and jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"I can't get down," said Mrs. Blent.

"Then oi mus get over ee," said Slow. And he proceeded to get over Mrs. Blent; and she, choosing the lesser evil of two, got down and went up the path to the cottage door, hugging the loaf. She knocked at the door. It was opened by Mrs. Don.

"Your bread, I believe," said Mrs. Blent, holding out the loaf.

"My word!" said Mrs. Don, taking it.

And down the path rustled Mrs. Blent, and up into the cart again she climbed, Mrs. Don watching from the cottage door.

Between the Dons' cottage and the Park there were no more stopping-places, and, arrived at the Park gates, Mrs. Blent would have got down and walked, but Slow had been told to take her to the Park, and the Park meant to him the house. He did n't deliver bread in the Park, but at the house, and as he treated bread so should he treat woman. So Mrs. Blent was taken to the very door of Up and Down Park — the back door.

"She's for the front," said Slow.

"They would have known that without being told," she said to herself, furious with Slow, furious with John and Joanna, furious with Hope. But they should never, never know how she had enjoyed that drive — the smell of the new bread — and on her mother's birthday of all days! John, Joanna, and Hope, having walked the short way, arrived at the house a few minutes before she did. She was distressed to find it was the house she was to see and not Lady Agnes.

"Her ladyship is in London," said the butler.

"And Mr. Norman?" asked Joanna.

Mr. Norman had left that morning for Norway. Miss Diana was at home. So Mrs. Blent saw Diana — thought her tall for her age — and strangely dressed — like a boy. She thought she ought to have worn a hat. It would have looked better. Diana did

hostess charmingly, adoring Joanna all the time. Mrs. Blent wondered why. There were too many animals to see, she decided. She thought pigs coarse. They should be left to farmers to deal with according to their condition. Chickens she thought vulgar, but necessary. Cows she liked in their proper places, and bulls she believed in but had no wish to see with her own eyes. She accepted them on faith. They were mixed up in her mind with faith. She knew they were held sacred in some countries — papal bulls — and all that.

Diana looked at Mrs. Blent with all the scorn a country child feels for a real Londoner, pitying her ignorance. When she saw Joanna was amused, she was amused too. Emboldened by the twinkle in Joanna's eyes, she would have taken Mrs. Blent across country, over stiles, under wire fences, but Joanna shook her head. Mrs. Blent must be tired. Mrs. Blent felt she had done enough: but she knew not her Googlie. She had seen, of course, a small boy, but she did not care much for small boys. Certainly not when she was dressed in her best clothes. Dangerous their ways. Muddy their boots. Sticky their hands. Oppressive their attentions. So she took no notice of Googlie; which was the way of all others bound to attract him. Advance towards him and he would retreat. Avoid him — flee from him, he would seek you out and follow you anywhere — even through a gorse patch or a bed of nettles. Mrs. Blent walked away from Googlie, humming as she went.

"Why d' you sing?" he asked. Mrs. Blent, having no good reason to give, walked on — in silence. Googlie had n't to go through a gorse patch or a bed of nettles, but just down a perfectly easy and narrow path. There were no difficulties in the way. He would have liked it harder. He was primordial in his desire to hunt his quarry.

"Well?" he said, walking beside Mrs. Blent, looking up at her in his most friendly manner; "can you milk cows?"

This was altogether too leading a question. Was this child probing her rural past? Did she look as though she could milk a cow?

"My dear little boy," she said, "I hate cows."

"You hate cows?" said Googlie, amazed. "What about milk, then?"

"Milk is quite a different thing," said Mrs. Blent.

"Not so very," said Googlie, anxious to impart at least some of the knowledge that was his. "D' you know about b-umble-bees?"

She knew nothing about bumble-bees.

"Well," said Googlie, "you don't know much, do you?"

"I know when little boys are polite."

"When are they?" He was interested.

Here Mrs. Blent came out from the Park to find herself looking over the fence at a cow in a field. The cow in the field, looking over the fence, saw Mrs. Blent. That is how history is written. The same summer day to both — the same grass —

the same buttercups — and yet the point of view, how different!

"Don't go in," she said to Googlie, "don't go in. You will be tossed."

Googlie smiled.

"People *are* tossed," she said.

"That's as God wills," said Googlie firmly and piously.

"Oh," said Mrs. Blent, "that's it, is it?"

"What is — *it?*"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Don't you believe in God?" asked Googlie, shocked yet immensely interested. Then the current of his thoughts was changed. Perhaps something he saw changed it — "Which would you rather be — "

"Rather be what?"

"You must n't say that. You must wait till I say — wh-ich would you rather be — a rhionoceros or a nelephant?"

"Little boys should be seen and not heard," said Mrs. Blent. It seemed the only answer to the question — was the only answer for one of her build.

"Why?" said Googlie. "D' you like guinea-pigs, then? They are very quiet little things — would you like to be them?"

She said she would n't.

"Not any animals, would n't you?" asked Googlie ingratiatingly. "Not a darlin' little soft — "

"No, nothing," said Mrs. Blent; "I'd rather be myself."

"Wo-ould you?" asked Googlie; there were limits to his powers of credulity. "Well, I should like to be some animals."

"I've got a little boy at home," said Mrs. Blent. Happy thought!

"Have you — have you three little boys?"

"No — I had three little boys once; but — first one died."

"Then there were two," said Googlie softly, recognising a well-known historical legend. "Two little — well, not nigger boys — you know what comes next." Googlie spoke very softly.

"Then the other one died — yes, dear, he died too."

"Then there was one," said Googlie, with immense satisfaction. A story, not known to be strictly true, was true — triumphantly true. He had known it to be true, but there were doubters of a certain age — "One little" — here Googlie whispered "—— —— then there was none — but there won't not be none," he said cheerfully, "will there?"

"That's as God wills, dear," said Mrs. Blent tearfully.

"The same as I said," said Googlie. "Do you know what Diana asked Daddy?"

Mrs. Blent shook her head.

"She asked Daddy — if God was very busy making the babies she is going to have some day — and Daddy just hugged her — what d' *you* say?"

Googlie, knee-deep in buttercups and grasses, was a sight that stirred even Mrs. Blent's heart to admiration. Googlie's heart was still with the cow — unwavering in its allegiance — he loved cows.

"Supposin'," he said, — "supposin' to-day was the cow's birthday, and God said — for a very, very great treat she might —" Googlie looked, with an illuminating smile towards Mrs. Blent, then to the cow, then skywards — right up into the blue — blinking at the sun —

"Absurd little boy," said Mrs. Blent, smiling. A taut wire fence separated her from the cow — God was in heaven. She could afford to be amused. But she was not sure she was enjoying her day in the country.

She and Joanna walked back to Up and Down through the woods slowly; and as they walked they talked of things near to the heart of Joanna and far from the understanding of Mrs. Blent.

Mrs. Blent wondered — at the end of the walk — if the Templars meant to make provision for Hope, in the future. They had adopted her. She had been told by Mr. Blent to find out. She had not found out. On the contrary, she had found Mrs. Templar curiously detached where money was concerned. To Mrs. Blent it seemed she was entirely oblivious to everything practical, and saw only that which was beautiful and good — principally where it did not exist.

As Mrs. Blent and Hope journeyed home, Mrs.

Blent wondered if she had enjoyed herself. Hope had. The girl was silent; every now and then she smiled as at some tender memory. "Amused, dear?" asked her mother.

"Willing Manners went down the other day and Daddy John read the Book of Job to him for two hours."

"He did n't kiss me," said Mrs. Blent irrelevantly.

"No?"

"Hope — a cottage we stopped at on the way to the Park — whose would it be?"

"Where the road divides and dips down to Stream Cottage?"

"I should say so."

"Mrs. Don's. Why?"

"I only wondered, dear. Do you admire Diana Norman?"

Hope said she admired her very much.

"Yes, I thought she was very pretty — too thin, rather — Mr. Templar is very thin."

"He always was," said Hope, not seeing the connection.

"Did you think my diamond ear-rings looked too much in the country?"

"I did n't notice them."

"But people would who were n't accustomed to them — would n't they?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

"Does Lady Agnes wear them in the country?"

"I think so — I don't know."

"Smaller ones, perhaps. I think if you wear them at all they ought to be noticeable. I went to church, so that was all right — but that was luck. I did n't know I was going when I put them on."

"You could n't have gone to church without them," said Hope.

"That's what I meant by luck. I feel as if I had had such a funny day in the country — going to church — and coming back with branches and no flowers."

Hope slept, or pretended to sleep — at all events, she was alone with her thoughts, which were of a long summer's day spent in Up and Down alone — with Paul. What a difference there is between the day spent in the country with the one person in the world, and the day in the country — the same country — spent with every one in the world, or any one!

The train crept slowly into the big stone prison of a London terminus, and Mrs. Blent was glad to be in dear London again—where the parks were quite like the country and the trees like trees — or like men walking to those who saw as little as Mrs. Blent saw.

Before Mrs. Blent went to sleep that night she said to Mr. Blent —

"Who did Jenny Wattle marry? — you remember Jenny?"

"One — Don," said Mr. Blent sententiously, and he slept. But Mrs. Blent slept not. Years ago she had cast her bread upon the waters — it had returned to her and she had handed it to Mrs. Don.

XXIV

ELIZABETH COLUMN gave a party and asked to it every one she knew — lovers of birds, bird-nesters — and just people. And many of them came because they liked Elizabeth, some because they liked birds and bird-nesting, and the rest because they liked to do what they were asked. Paul came because old Proser had advised him to, and in all her life she had never played him false. He depended upon her as some people depend on their butler or their Bradshaw.

Elizabeth's party was an evening party. The baby next door, seeing the awning go up, said, "No sleep for Baby to-night," but Baby was wrong. A baby is no more a prophetess in her own perambulator than is a man in his own country. Miss Column did not dance, nor did she choose to interrupt good conversation with bad music. (Her words.)

Up the front doorsteps ran a red carpet. Elizabeth had paid for its running or was going to. That and the awning constituted it a party. Paul passed into the narrow hall, handed his hat to some one who existed but to take it and others, and ran up the stairs, two steps at a time, which old Proser would not have allowed. At the top of the stairs stood Elizabeth, in dove-coloured satin, gently swearing under her breath to her pleasure at seeing

every one; which Paul knew could not be true. It was truer with her than it would have been with most people. Beyond Elizabeth he could see into a room that was still empty enough to be comfortable. At the end of the room against a dark curtain stood a girl. She looked like the spirit of a beech wood. She was dressed in green — soft and diaphanous green. Round her head she wore a wreath of green leaves — close-fitting, small leaves. She was so slight that a wind must have blown her where it listed. She was like a soft west wind herself and she blew straight through Paul's heart. She was talking to one or two people. Paul drew near wondering what she was talking about. He heard. It was of birds. Two or three men listened, but as they listened they looked. It was of the girl they were thinking and of nothing else. And when she had finished describing some bird, they asked her to say it all over again. And Paul was furious. He loved birds. But there was no bird in the world he cared to hear about now. He wanted to know the girl's name, and if prayer is an unuttered thought here was its answer, for it was of this girl he had thought day and night since that night at the play. He went back to Elizabeth standing at the top of the stairs, — "looking," he thought, "such a dear idiot, saying how d' you do to impossible people," — and asked to be introduced to the spirit of spring.

"Yes, is n't she just that? Say I sent you and ask her about her bird."

"What bird?"

"Ah, that's just it — ask her. She discovered it."

"Of her very own self, as Hammy says?"

"Who's Hammy?"

"My cousin."

"Oh, of course. Yes, of her very own self."

"Is that introduction enough?"

"You, an explorer, ask that?"

"As an explorer I should ask none; as dear old Proser's pupil I am intensely conscientious."

"Go and tell her I sent you."

Paul went and, standing near Milly, waited an opportunity to speak to her. When she turned to him, he said: "Miss Column says you have a picture to show me."

"A picture? Are you sure she said a picture?"

"No, I am not sure, not quite sure."

"There are photographs — upstairs."

Paul hesitated. "No, it was n't upstairs, it was here — at least I think it was. Come and sit in the window. Perhaps I was mistaken," and he went to the window. She followed. "Now, tell me," he said.

"Tell you what?" asked Milly, "about my bird?"

"Yes, about your bird — very slowly, please. I want it to last a long time. I am longing to hear about it."

And she told him all about her bird, and when she got to the halo which had seemed to surround

her bird — the bird of her great discovery — Paul's eyes were dancing, and — as every other man in the world would have done, including Hammy — he asked her to tell it all over again.

"But are you interested in birds?"

"Enormously interested — in birds."

"Seriously?" asked Milly. "Well, don't look at me like that — or I can't tell you."

This sobered Paul. He was quite certain the dear old Proser would not have approved of that. "Now, seriously," he said.

But Milly had already grown very serious. Serious, she was even more delicious than she had been before. He seemed to hear the sighing of the wind in the trees: that strange rustling of leaves that comes before a storm. Not that Milly was going to storm, but she was unhappy. People — especially men — laughed at her bird. Paul asked her what was the matter? Had he hurt her? And the tenderness of his voice must have told her how unwillingly he would do that. It did. She knew at once.

"No, not hurt, but you must n't laugh at my bird, because I saw it and it has made Miss Column so happy."

"Tell me again and I promise I won't smile — it's only because I like your bird so much that I smiled. It seems such a jolly little bird —"

"Rather biggish!" said Milly.

"Yes, that's it — rather biggish — hopping about."

"It ran more than hopped," said Milly.

"Yes, that's what I meant — a hop — and then a run."

"And a skip?"

"And a jump?" And they both laughed.

"Now, tell me your name — you must have a name if your bird has n't?"

Milly looked at him. Did he know — could he know — her name was as little known as that of the bird? She met the kind eyes of Paul Blunt; he had asked because he wanted to know. For no other reason in the world. She told him her name was Don — Milly Don.

And where did she come from — in what wood had she lived?

Wood? There were woods all round Up and Down. She came from there.

"Where Mrs. Templar lives?"

"D' you know her?" asked Milly, and Paul said he had met her.

"There?" asked Milly.

"Yes, there."

"I never saw you."

Paul let that pass. It was too satisfying a statement to question. "Is she a friend of yours?" he asked. "Of course she is."

Milly said she was her best friend. Paul said he could well believe that. And Milly said there was far more than he could ever imagine in Mrs. Templar's friendship. It was n't an ordinary friend-

ship. "Do you think I'm an ordinary girl?" She asked the question perfectly simply, and Paul answered just as simply that she was certainly no ordinary girl. And Milly was n't satisfied: he had n't understood what she meant. She was so desperately anxious he should understand. "My voice?" she asked. "Is it quite the sort of voice you like?"

He said, "Quite."

"But it can't be — not now. When I was telling you about my bird it was — was n't it?"

"It was, of course, and so it is now."

"Is it — not in the least different?"

Paul had to admit the slightest difference — in the pronunciation of words, perhaps, — just a little — but the voice — he was distressed. Milly was distressed too.

"You see," she said, "a lady comes to teach me to speak and she has taught me to describe my bird. Did n't you notice the way I said 'feather'?"

"How did you say it before?" asked Paul, and Milly said it. A delicious sound he found it, and he laughed.

Milly said he must n't, because Miss Broser —

Ah, that was it. Here was the dear old Proser at work again.

"Miss Broser teaches you, does she?"

"Yes, do you know her?"

"Yes, I know her."

"Did she teach you to speak?"

"She has taught me a great many things."

"Of course — you knew how to speak, but she makes me say, 'How about the brown cow's mouth now.' How do I say it?"

"Perfectly."

"Really and truly? She says she's had many disappointments over that — in quite nice families —"

"Dear old Proser!"

"She has told me a lot about a little boy she used to teach. He's a celebrated explorer now and she says he's more than that."

"He might well be — something more than that," said Paul hurriedly. "He's not much of an explorer."

"Why d' you say that; don't you like him?"

Paul said he had a very great regard for him, at which Milly made a face. "He used to be a dear little boy — he used to say his prayers," she said.

"I assure you he never did — please — if he did, Miss Broser has no business to tell a secret of that kind. She might tell you what he prays for now."

"She does."

"She does? What does she say he prays for now?"

"He prays — that — he may shoot the biggest lion in the world — fifty feet long by —"

"No, seriously — he does pray now, you know."

"Does he?"

"So often that he does n't know when he does it," said Paul. And Milly laughed.

"I ought n't to have done that," she said. "Miss Broser says no lady laughs as if she meant it — just

a little ripple — so" — and Milly rippled as sanctioned by Miss Broser. "Shall I tell you about my bird — just for practice?"

"Do!"

And Milly, a demon of mischief dancing in her eyes which set Paul's heart dancing to the same music, began in a low voice — exquisitely modulated — according to the school of Broser: "It was biggish and it was brownish and bluish — with strange spots upon it and streaks here and there. As it flew away I saw its under-wings were orange — the wing feathers — *feathers*" — Milly called his attention by insistent repetition to the exquisite pronunciation of the word — "were pointed, and there was a kind of a halo all round it. That's all!" she said, and she got up and went away, leaving Paul alone.

"A charming child," said an old man, taking her place beside Paul. He was an ornithologist, and Paul was surprised to find himself entirely uninterested in birds.

Of this party Hope knew nothing.

XXV

THE next day Paul Blunt wrote to Elizabeth saying what a delightful party it had been. His was the only letter she received saying so. It had been a perfectly ordinary party, she knew that, and there was no reason to say it was otherwise. She had had two letters asking her to take Milly to tea with the writers of the letters — men, both of them, and Elizabeth tore up the letters and put them in the waste-paper basket. Paul added a postscript to say he was coming to tell Miss Column how much he had enjoyed the party. He came. He told her. He went on telling her with his eyes on the clock, but Milly did not come in. He realised at last how impossible it was to go on saying how delightful the party had been, so he went away promising to come again.

"You may have forgotten something you wanted to say about the party," said Elizabeth. "I begin to think it was a better party than I knew."

When Paul got home he wrote and asked Miss Column to dine with him and go to a play and to bring Miss Don with her. He tore that up and wrote to Milly — the same letter exactly, except that he asked her to bring Miss Column.

Milly brought the letter to Miss Column. She read it and said Milly must answer it herself.

"How? What shall I say?"

"Exactly, my child, what you wish to say."

"What I *must* say?"

"Yes, if you put it that way."

And Milly wrote:—

Dear Captain Blunt, — I should love it and so would Miss Column, but before I answer I want you to go down to Up and Down and see Mrs. Templar — or my mother — Mrs. Don; because I might not be the kind of girl you would want to take to a theatre — that's what I feel about it.

Yours sincerely,

M. Don.

"What did you say, Milly?" asked Miss Column. "I mean, more or less?"

"I said we should love to — but not just yet —"

"That's right, my child, there's the reed-warbler series I want reprinted."

Milly found herself entirely uninterested in reed-warblers. She was not so surprised as Paul had been when he found himself uninterested in birds generally. She had always known that birds were but the means to an end. She was intensely interested now in a nest of her own and her sense of duty she knew was as keenly developed as any bird's. She was prepared to build as patiently — be as good a mate — as self-sacrificing a mother — as any bird. She had reached the end towards which Miss Column had gently been leading her. And instead of reprinting the reed-warbler series she went and

looked at houses (the outsides only), which after all is bird-nesting — in the highest and best sense of the word.

She chose a dear little house (the expression hers), red brick, built after the fashion of a house in a country village — on the stage — it was almost too good to be true. In front of it was a paved square, enclosed by postern rails and chains. Between the cracks of the pavement sprang up patient little green things, like their country cousins plants, but less robust.

Then, having chosen the house, her thoughts went far away to the deserts she had pined for, the vast places — starlit skies — wonderful flowers and luscious fruits. She looked up: there was plenty of sky to be seen. There must be stars if you looked for them on clear nights; and there were no fruits you could n't get in London — some so precious as to be wrapped in silver paper — she had seen them. Then she looked at the house again and generously and magnanimously gave it up. He would n't like it — no explorer would. She frowned. Explorer, why explorer? She was n't thinking of any one in particular. She was. She had proved herself a deceiver. That night she wrote to Mrs. Templar. The night following Joanna wrote to her good friend Elizabeth, saying: —

Elizabeth, my dear, it's a lovely summer's day — or has been. The evening is beautiful. And I have had a day after my own heart — adventure — of a kind. It

may prove too much of an adventure. I was "souping" my way along the lanes this morning when I came face to face with our explorer. The soup I left to chance — some one has enjoyed it, I hope — and Martha mourns an umblemished basin. The explorer and I sat ourselves down under the beeches, and he told me at once — he wastes no time or words — that he has fallen in love with Milly. I think he said he was going to marry her; that he had come to me — she had sent him to me. I supposed he wanted to know who Milly's mother was, and he said, No, he knew that. This was surprising; but it turned out that he thought Mrs. Don was her mother. It's loyal of the child to say so — is n't it? Athough she could only say she was n't, which would n't help very much. I had a letter from Milly this morning, which I was to read to Paul Blunt. I had no idea I should so soon have the opportunity. I told him I had something to read to him. I asked him if I should read it? He said, Yes. I said, by way of explanation, that Milly had been bird-nesting. She had written the letter on her return. "Where had she been, I wonder?" he said. I said she was the most honest child I had ever met. He agreed. I think the best result of her upbringing is her perfect naturalness — this to you, Elizabeth, not to him. Her innate goodness grafted on to the honesty of the Dons has produced something very fine, to my mind.

I took out her letter and read it. I um-ummed a good deal, which tried him, but I read all she wished him to hear. "Tell him," she said, "I went out to service when I was fourteen. They were very kind. The lady died. I went out again. I took a ring. The lady was very kind. She sent me home. You took me into your house and you were kinder than everybody, that's all to tell him — at first." It's a pathetic letter, to me, at all events, and I wondered what he was thinking. He said nothing. What

could he say? To help matters I began to tell him the other side of the story — in my lack of understanding trying to make the best of it for Milly's sake. He stopped me and said he would marry the girl on her letter alone. So you see, Elizabeth, my dear, I was slow to understand. I said I loved him for it — but that was n't what he wanted, evidently. I wanted him to see Mrs. Don, but he would n't wait. He said he would come again. His poor mother, what will she say? Basinless I returned to Martha, unabashed, with a great light in my face — shining in my face — is that the expression? and John said: "What have you seen, my dear?" He loves adventures just as much as I do — adventure, more especially when it concerns a man and a maid. Very sentimental and romantical is John.

Yours,

JOANNA.

Elizabeth read the letter, re-read it, and yet once again. She and Milly were dining with Paul Blunt that evening. When she had told Milly that he had telephoned to say he had taken seats for a play, Milly had said, "He's been, then," which she had not understood. She understood now, but, of course, it was impossible. The Blunts would never consent to the marriage. Joanna was impossible.

XXVI

MEANWHILE Hammy's education progressed. He said he had done history, by which he meant he had finished it, and thankful he was, too, that he had. He had learnt about Mary Queen of Scots, and one day he had a lesson on the coming of the Magi. Then Miss Strickland told him to write an essay on the Magi. Women are very cruel to small children. "How would you like to do it yourself?" was Hammy's attitude of mind; but he did it. It was apparently a great physical effort, for he puffed and he blew after the manner of the little pig in the world-famed story, and then when he had done he handed the essay in to Miss Strickland, who put it aside. And when evening was come, and she sat alone in the schoolroom, she opened the copy-book, in which was written the essay. It should have lighted up the dull darkness of her evening, but it did n't. She read: "And at Christmas time when there are trees and you hang up stockings, Mary Queen of the Scots came to bethlem and she met the angels and some wise men, and my goodness did n't they all have fun together playing in the straw —"

At this point the foundations of Miss Strickland's belief in her power of teaching were shaken as by an earthquake, and the next morning she took the

essay to Mrs. Blent and, laying it before her, both literally and figuratively, asked her what should be done?

Mrs. Blent read the essay and said: "Well, after all, it's only Mary Queen of Scots he's got wrong. I don't see that it matters. I never could do dates myself. I should n't worry about that. He'll be going to school in a year or two."

Mrs. Blent was more exercised about Janet the Scotch nurserymaid's French accent. She had been teaching Hammy the days of the week in French. Some one had asked Hammy to say them and he had said: "Lundi, Mardi, McCreedy—" Miss Strickland said it was entirely outside Janet's province to teach Hammy French.

"Well, don't let it occur again," said Mrs. Blent. "It sounds so bad."

Miss Strickland could have borne that, but she was miserable and went to Hope to be comforted. Hope had too many troubles of her own to have time to sympathise with one whose troubles were purely academic. Why Paul Blunt no longer came to the house was of infinitely greater importance. Hope did not tell Miss Strickland that, but Miss Strickland said: "You see when you've got to teach it's a very serious thing if you can't. I never expected to teach. I had every prospect of marrying."

"And what happened?" asked Hope, feeling bound to ask the question. Miss Strickland sat, asking for it.

"He just stopped coming," she said; "no one realises the number of men who just do that." Hope did —

Mrs. Blent, seeing Hope looking dull and depressed, suggested going to a play.

"Not a matinée," said Hope.

And her mother agreed, adding — "But Father won't go in the evening."

"Then he must stay at home," said Hope; and she and her mother went.

"I like to see the curtain go up, don't you, dear?" said Mrs. Blent, and Hope said she did.

"I really," she said, emboldened by Hope's sympathy, "like to see the people come in. But Miss Broser says the best people are late. I think it's selfishness, don't you?"

Hope said she thought it resolved itself into one of two things — you either climbed over, or were climbed over. You could choose which you liked best.

"I know which I would rather," said Mrs. Blent.

So they went to the play, and they were climbed over. Mrs. Blent looked anxiously at Hope to see if she were enjoying herself. And she noticed other people looked at Hope too — for their own pleasure, not to see hers. Mrs. Blent was enormously pleased. Hope was certainly a very satisfactory daughter to have — so far as looks went. So statuesque!

Hope was really more cross than statuesque. It was not with her mother she wished to go to a play.

After the curtain had gone up, several people came into the stalls directly behind them. There was a great fuss and arranging of seats — and whispered discussions.

"So selfish!" whispered Mrs. Blent; "what did he say?"

Hope did not know what the butler on the stage had said — nothing of any importance, she was sure.

"I like to hear every word," whispered Mrs. Blent; "butlers on the stage are very like butlers, aren't they? They do them very well, and I don't suppose they ever see a real one —"

Hope frowned.

"But it is selfish, dear — what did she say?"

"You can't hear if you talk," said Hope.

Mrs. Blent subsided.

The curtain went down on the first act and Hope heard a voice behind her — a voice she recognised at once. Paul's, and he was asking some one to tell him about the — *bird?* Could it be that? And she heard a girl's voice refusing. He begged her to tell him — please, and the girl, relenting, said, "It was biggish — and it was bluish — with strange spots upon it — and streaks — here and there. As it flew away" — then Hope missed a word, — "the wing feathers were" — again she missed something — "and that's all."

"No," said Paul, "its aura."

"Its halo, you mean?" asked the girl. "It had a sort of a —"

Then Hope heard Miss Column's voice: "Is **that** your bird, Milly? You must be serious about it."

"We are," said Paul.

It is not difficult to imagine the anguish of mind that small word caused Hope.

"The interval's rather long, dear, is n't it?" said her mother. "I think a man helps out an interval, don't you?"

Mrs. Blent turned to look at those people fortunate enough to possess a man during the interval and saw Paul. "You, Paul, why, here's Hope!"

Hope turned so that she saw Paul without seeing Milly. "You're in Hammy's bad books," she said over her shoulder.

"Am I, why?"

"Because — you've stopped coming." It was a sentence that would have hurt the sensitive ears of Miss Broser.

It hurt Paul too. He never failed a child: it was his boast. "Tell him I've been so busy."

"I will," said Hope.

"You were rather cold, dear," said her mother. "Hammy does n't really mind. There, it's going up."

The curtain went up.

"I don't like pyjamas on the stage," said Mrs. Blent, "and certainly not on a girl. I thought this was a nice play. The papers said it was."

"Then it must be," said Hope.

"Yes, that's what I thought. What's the use of

papers if you can't go by them. But, Hope dear, — don't look so glum, — we don't do these things, do we? It's a pity to give people a wrong idea of society, is n't it?"

Mrs. Blent became engrossed in the play; Hope, in the conversation carried on at intervals, very softly, between Paul and Milly. Of the play she saw nothing, heard nothing. She had discovered it extraordinarily unlike life. Did any one on the stage experience anything at all of the agony of disappointment she was suffering? or represent her sufferings? If they had felt — in life — one thousandth part of what they on the stage professed to feel, they could not have expressed their sorrow as they did. In silence alone could such misery find expression.

On the way home her mother asked her what she thought Sir Godfrey should have done — acknowledged the child? What ought Lady Geraldine to have done? Looked in the paper basket before she gave it to the footman to empty? "I am sure I don't, but then there are no wills about in an ordinary house, are there? What a mercy it was she did n't burn the will, was n't it?" Did n't Hope love the little boy in the velvet suit? The scene with his father was so pretty, was n't it? Were Cabinet Ministers like that, did Hope think? So fond of their children — playing trains with the little boy and putting the Teddy Bear to bed with him. It was the sort of thing Paul might do. Did Hope see the

girl Paul was with? She was very pretty, was n't she? Mrs. Blent paused, then went on: "I think Godfrey forgave Lady Geraldine. I don't believe, though, that anybody who was so miserable would be so smartly dressed — except that it might help one to forget. Did you notice he said — 'If you ever come back, come back in your' — what coloured frock was it? With what in her hat? — not nasturtiums, was it? I liked the lawyer. I wonder why they make lawyers so nice on the stage — they don't clergymen. The lady's-maid should n't have worn a cap, should she? They do make funny mistakes on the stage, but the play 's the thing after all. I don't suppose they worry about little things — but still I think if everything was quite correct it would attract the best kind of people — would n't it? One does n't like being falsely represented. Of course in some things they do much better on the stage than in real life. More real — if that is possible. I mean, for instance — when I used to tell your father there was another baby coming he did n't say wonderful things to me, but rather — well, of course, it 's different in life, is n't it? There is no one looking on — no one who has paid for seats — and that makes a difference. Father never troubled to show his deeper feelings, but they were there, of course. He was upset when our eldest little boy died. But even then he did n't say much — of course a theatre is different — that's why I like it. It's a change from life. There was one bit —

that scene with Lady Geraldine and the little boy when I cried — did n't you? I hope you enjoyed yourself, dear; I did, I think it's a pity not to, almost, when you pay for the tickets yourself — don't you?"

Hope did not answer, and Mrs. Blent wondered if she was upset about something. So afraid was she that Hope must be, that late that night she stole into Hope's room. She opened the door very quietly. It was a bright moonlight night, so light that she could see the bed was empty and had not been slept in. Then she looked from the bed to the window, and there at the open window was Hope. To Mrs. Blent there was no unhappiness in the world so great as that which made star-gazing a necessity, or even a possibility. The discomfort of it was so tremendous. No matter what happened to her she should always go to bed — with a hot-water bottle if possible.

"Hope," she said softly, "are you unhappy?"

"Not in the least, thank you," said Hope.

Mrs. Blent drew back crushed — between the window and the dressing-table. For a moment all that a mother should feel she felt. She had been ready to take Hope in her arms and ask what it was that was hurting her, but now she could not. She was so easily squashed. Father had always crushed her. She had had no experience in comforting, as it were. She had always been repulsed — driven back. To her now there was something almost

angelic in Hope's appearance. In the moonlight her night-gown was so dazzlingly white: her face and arms so dazzlingly white — her young body so beautiful in its attitude of despair. She had no colour — which, perhaps, was a pity. But her pale beauty made her sorrow infinitely more appealing. Father could never have looked like this — therefore Mrs. Blent had never been able to offer him the comfort she could offer Hope. It was his fault. He had not inspired her pity. It was there, because she felt it. It was a physical pain she felt. Most sorrow hitherto had been to her more like discomfort. She had wondered sometimes if she could feel. Now she knew. It was a relief almost. She must try again, she wanted so desperately to get nearer this child of hers. After all, this radiant creature was hers — whatever Joanna might say she felt and try to make Hope feel.

"Tell me, my child," she said; "after all, I am your mother — don't let it come between us that I let you go — it was for your good I did it — and because you were so pretty — I thought the Templars were different — dear, you do understand — Father never expected to make money as fast as he did. Everything he touched seemed to make — money — If I had known — do try and understand," — and this most impossible of all mothers put her arms round Hope and drew her towards her. "Is it Paul, dear?"

"Don't, don't," said Hope, drawing away from her mother's arms.

"But, dear, it is; you were quite different after you had seen him. Tell me; I do understand. I may be funny and all that, but after all you do belong to me — tell me!"

But Hope would not. There was nothing to tell. "Please let me go."

And her mother would have let her go; but Hope's hair had got entangled in a diamond brooch. "I once saw two people at a concert," said Mrs. Blent, "caught together by their toques — in the middle of a sonata. It looked so funny. One had something in her toque that caught in the other's veil. Don't pull, dear."

"Cut it," said Hope.

"Your hair, dear. No, wait!"

"Cut it!" cried Hope.

"The brooch is entangled in my lace, too," said Mrs. Blent, fumbling.

"Cut it!"

"The lace, dear? Why, it cost two hundred guineas."

"Cut it, cut it!" moaned Hope. "Oh, leave me alone." She reached out her hand for her nail scissors on the dressing-table, and with them she cut her hair away from the diamond brooch which blazed on her mother's bodice. "Now go, please, go!"

And Mrs. Blent went.

Before going to her room — where Father was — always was — she must undo her brooch and disentangle from it the hair Hope had cut off. "Such

— a pity — dear, dear!" she said. She went into the nursery. She stood under the electric light; the tears were running down her face. She pulled out the hair. It was like spun gold. She twisted it round her finger and tied it with a piece of silk, drawn from a plait of silks in Nannie's work-basket. Then she went to bed.

When Hope came down to breakfast, her father looked at her and said: "You've cut a fringe. What did you do that for?"

He was always cross at breakfast. "I don't like it," he added.

"I like it," said Hammy, but then he had breakfasted.

"It's the fashion," said Mrs. Blent, buttering her toast.

XXVII

Mrs. Don had two visitors on one day — for her a great dissipation, considering the quality of the visitors. Widow Waysey calling in to borrow a bucket did not count; or even Mrs. Templar, for the matter of that, because she came so often. And she never said, "Sit down, Mrs. Don." With Mrs. Templar Mrs. Don sat down or stood as she chose — and no disrespect meant.

Mrs. Don's first visitor on that eventful summer's day was an elderly lady, very soft-spoken, but decided; so Mrs. Don described her manner, adding that she was a real lady and no mistake. Mrs. Don enjoyed telling the story of her visitor. "She walked in — she did — and asked me if I was Mrs. Don? and I answered: 'That I am, ma'am,' just like that — as if I was proud of the fact — I 'm not sayin' I 'm not. The lady sailed into the cottage, quite gentle-like, but sailed, for all that; and, seating herself, asked me to sit down. My own chairs can't have known themselves being sat so grandly upon. She was a pleasant enough lady and surprising, too, if you come to think of it. 'Mrs. Don,' she said, 'we are both mothers.' I 've been called names before by women, but this was n't names exactly, because it was true, but calling for no particular mention. So I says, Yes, I supposed we might say we were,

without any offence. Then the lady smiled, rather sadly it seemed to me, and she said, 'Mothers are alike in wishing the best happiness for their children — ain't they?' and I said, I supposed they were — some more than others — some less. Mothers are a bit soft, that's what I said. I thought she was wanting my Lily for scullery-maid, and I was just going to say she was too young — as she is — when the lady said: 'You know what I have come for?' and I said, Never — had no idea — never was so plum-plussed in my life.

"'It's about your daughter, Milly.' Then I began to see sparks, so to speak. 'Oh, Milly —' says I; 'oh, yes.'

"Then she went on to say her son had fallen in love with my Milly. I said to her, 'No wonder you're put out, ma'am,' and she said she was glad I understood: but after a bit of talkin' she had to allow it was no use bein' put out, because it appears that what her son wants he has, and he wants Milly, and to all appearances he's got her, and a good girl she is, too. Then, seeing her — the lady, I mean — all of a tremble and making the best of it, as it were, I said, 'Look here, ma'am, there never was a better girl than Milly, according to her lights. What she is we've made her from livin' with us, and we've done our best for her — but if it would make you happier — and make it better for your son — I may as well tell you she's no child of ours and never was. We wish her happiness, all the same, just as

if she was our own — but underneath the outside of Milly — as it were — there lies a finer Milly — she's grand underneath, that's what she is. Maybe she's a princess, who knows? She has the way of people in books, with her dancin' and singin' and her happiness. Have you seen her?' The lady said, No, she had not seen her.

"Then I got up from the chair in which I had been asked to sit, and, holdin' out my arms, and turnin' myself this way and that, and round about, I said: 'Now, ma'am, look at me well and long — and, havin' looked, go and see Milly and if you see any likeness between us, then I'm nearer Heaven than I ever thought to be, if looks count for anything,' and having said all that — and more — I burst into tears, not bein' accustomed to highfalutin speakin', as it were. Then the lady said, 'Do you mean to tell me Milly is not your child?' And I said, 'I do mean it,' — and then what did she say but 'I'm sorry, Mrs. Don!' Whatever did she mean by that? Then she went on to say that when she married her friends said she had married beneath her. But when she had been married a little time, she discovered that she had married very much above her — that's what she said, and I said, 'Did you now? It's not often husbands turn out better than you thought 'em.' So I say, it's a funny mixing-up world. Milly a lady to all appearances — and not supposed to be — and Miss Hope supposed to be by all appearances and turns out to be not quite so — in a sense. I

say, stick where God puts you. He puts you there for some good purpose — if it's only to cook Don's Sunday dinner — to each woman a task. It's a mercy there were n't two put to do Don's dinner! And to say Mr. Blunt was higher up than that sailing-into-my-cottage lady of his, well, it's not sensical. It was a comfort to me when my old Don walked in that evenin', and I says to him, 'Are you a gentleman what you don't appear to be, or are you not — which you do appear to be?' And he said, 'Jenny, old woman, you're a terror, that's what you are,' and he laughed. He likes a joke and Widow Waysey was terribly pleased when I told her."

So much for Mrs. Don's account of the visit of Paul's mother. It could not have been an accurate description — but that's how it struck Mrs. Don, because she told it in those words to Widow Waysey and Job Salting, Mrs. Templar, and a few others she could trust.

About her other visitor, Mrs. Blent, who came an hour later, she said very little to any one: but it is believed, of the two visits she enjoyed the second one the more. Her second visitor called her Jenny — in a whisper — and all the time her second visitor spoke in a whisper and most of the time she spent in asking Jenny if she was surprised. And Jenny Don could truthfully answer to every single question that she was — that took back that you could have knocked her down.

To Jenny was shown, under vows of strict secrecy,

silk skirts and stockings, jewelled rings and earrings — and a watch (no bigger than one of the buttons of Jenny's bodice) set in diamonds. Then there was a great deal to say about Milly, who, it appeared, was going to marry Mrs. Blent's cousin by marriage — her husband's cousin — who would some day be a very rich man. And who was Milly? — as good as he was, perhaps, — there was no knowing. And was n't it surprising about Hope? Had Jenny known? Of course Jenny had not. Mr. and Mrs. Templar had come to Up and Down with a child, and when people do that there are no questions asked. Just as nobody had asked about Milly, which they might have done if they had had eyes that saw, Mrs. Blent said. Of course Mr. and Mrs. Templar had n't wanted to part with Hope. Jenny would understand that — a daughter, after all, *is* a daughter — and Jenny laughed and said a daughter, after all, was n't a daughter — sometimes.

Then her visitor asked Jenny if she had recognised her when she had brought the bread? And Jenny said, Not then so much as in the middle of the night. She had said then, after puzzling her brains to death, "Why, it was Hatty!"

"And you'll never tell any one?" said Hatty Blent.

"No, ma'am; still fond of crusts are you?" And Mrs. Blent owned to it.

"But it is n't everything to be rich, Jenny," she added.

"P'raps not," said Mrs. Don, "but you can eat the crust and leave the crumb, there's something in that. It's the other way round with most of us at our age."

"Tell me," said Mrs. Blent, "about Mrs. Templar?"

"Mrs. Templar?" said Mrs. Don; "well, there may be good enough words to describe her, but I don't know them."

"My daughter had her choice, and has chosen to live with us," said Mrs. Blent complacently.

"Yes, she would; she was never like her mother — beg your pardon, I'm sure — I mean Mrs. Templar."

Two friends meeting after a number of years must have had more than that to say to each other, but if they had no one knew what it was. Mrs. Don was seen opening her garden gate to a very grand lady 'in silks and all that.' They could n't go so far as to say Mrs. Don curtseyed, because it was n't her way, but she was on her good behaviour, that was certain. The lady, Up and Down learned, was Miss Hope's new mother from London — Mrs. Blent. "So that's how it was?" If Up and Down had had to choose they would have chosen Mrs. Templar. But then villages, — well, well, they are slow to change.

Mrs. Don's first visitor, it appeared, went up to see Mrs. Templar after seeing Mrs. Don. It was said she walked quickly through the village — she did n't sail — or anything like sail. For one of

her age she walked quickly, with her head down and her eyes looking at the ground (which is not the way to see a village). She stopped and asked Widow Waysey the way, and Widow Waysey might have shown it to her with a jerk of the head or thumb, it was so straight forward as it were. Just round the corner and up the hill! But Widow Waysey was not made that way. She said she would show the lady — probably expecting to hear something for her pains. In order to increase her chances she took the lady a long way round, up a lane and down another — a pathway worn by Mr. Norman in avoiding people after church, so it was said. Widow Waysey hoped the lady would n't notice. She walked too quickly to make talking easy, and it was all Widow Waysey could do to keep up.

"Mrs. Don said it was five minutes' walk," said the lady. "Surely it's more."

And Widow Waysey said, Mrs. Don's clock went fast and Mrs. Don was very active — active in some ways.

"I walk as fast as most women of my age," said the lady, quickening her pace.

"A deal faster, ma'am," gasped Widow Waysey. She was thankful to jerk her thumb in the direction of the church. She would n't come up the hill. The vicarage lay just behind — once a week, Sunday mornings, was enough with a hill so steep.

"Now, what did she do that for?" thought Mrs. Blunt to herself.

"Whatever did she walk like that for?" said Widow Waysey to herself.

Joanna laughed when Mrs. Blunt told her, and said Widow Waysey had only wanted to know why Mrs. Blunt had come to Up and Down, why she had gone to see Mrs. Don, — and had only wanted to know what Mrs. Don had said and what they had both said — it was so little to ask.

"How curious!" said Mrs. Blunt.

"Do you think so — with seven and sixpence a week there are a lot of things you want to know — a lot of questions you want to ask."

"You *mean* —?" asked Mrs. Blunt.

"I mean — you want some sort of excitement and amusement to eke it out."

"Mrs. Templar — what is Milly Don like — and who is she?"

Joanna told her all she knew about Milly.

"Would you be satisfied if you had a son and he wanted to marry her?"

"Wanted to — or married her?" asked Joanna.

"With him it 's the same thing."

Joanna paused.

"If I had a son? It's difficult to say — if I say anything you must discount it by remembering that I am quite impossible — and hopeless. You cannot go by what I think — or feel — about these matters. Beauty is beauty to me whether it goes hand in hand with riches or poverty. Goodness is goodness whether it comes of good family or lowly.

It is character that counts, I think, but then I am impossible."

"Yes — yes, I know, but I'm placed in a very awkward position. I am on several committees of Societies for Promoting the Equality of Classes and Encouraging Brotherly Love —"

"I know," said Joanna, "but it's a thing you can't promote — committees can't do it."

"Then how can it be done?" asked Mrs. Blunt.

Joanna smiled.

"Yes, yes, I know," said Mrs. Blunt; "but one does not expect to be asked to go to such lengths — and the illegitimacy — you must admit that is hard to accept."

"Yes, yes, hardest of all for the child — the child is not asked if it will bear it — the child of all people in the world is the least to blame. If I had a son who wanted to marry a girl who was mean and cruel — and jealous and small — I should be sorry. If he wanted to marry a girl who was good and generous and kind and beautiful — or what I call beautiful — I should be glad. The accident of birth — well, of course, I know it matters: how much I'm not capable of judging. About Milly, there is just this to be said — Mrs. Don knows nothing about the child — why should we imagine there is anything against her? She has triumphed over all her difficulties. Why should we prove her stumbling-block?"

Mrs. Blunt thought to herself that not to know who Milly was, or where she had come from, was

quite bad enough. But to make Mrs. Templar see her point of view was not possible, so she did not try.

"For some years after I married, my people never saw me or tried to see me," she said.

"Brotherly love," murmured Joanna.

"Then the goodness of my husband triumphed —"

"And now?" asked Joanna.

"Oh, now they are devoted to him — he is able to do so much for them —"

"I, too," said Joanna, "married against the wishes of my people."

"You, dear Mrs. Templar, but what did they want?"

"You mean they could not have expected me to do better? I quite agree with you."

"No, no, please don't think that — I mean Mr. Templar — how could any one say he was n't —"

"They did n't. He was n't rich, that was all."

"Rich? Do people, after all, attach such importance to riches?"

"I believe they do," said Joanna.

"I don't think much of money, that I know: but I do wish I knew who Milly is. There is every chance of my husband being offered a peerage. As a Radical he would appreciate the honour — to me it means very little — and Paul, of course, is —"

"And Milly would in course of time be a peeress?" Joanna had grasped the situation. Milly in a coronet. Well, there were peeresses who would not look

as well as she would. A coronet on Milly would look less incongruous than it did on the Venus of Milo — the Blents' Venus.

"Are you interested in goats?" asked Joanna, finding herself at a loss to amuse Mrs. Blunt. Mrs. Blunt said, Not in the least. They did not come into her life at all. She would rather look at the roses, and with the roses Joanna left her.

Joanna felt there was no argument so strong as the silence of nature, which speaks as nothing else speaks. It appeals without pleading. It invites confidence without betraying curiosity, and as Mrs. Blunt walked through the rioting disorder of Joanna's roses something of the nature of Joanna became hers. In this quiet garden, miles away from everywhere, it seemed easy enough to forget the world and its births and marriages; its social ambitions; its snares and temptations; its smallnesses; its strivings; its struggles; its failures. Was it the quietness of this garden that gave Joanna that look of peace that was hers? Was it her love for everything that gave her that smile? Was it her belief in every one that gave her that hopefulness? Was it the impossibility of her John that danced in her eyes? Or was it her own? That she enjoyed her own shortcomings was quite evident. She did not make the slightest effort to be possible and like other people. It was ridiculous that Paul should have loved her directly he saw her. His praise of her had been extravagant. Mr. Norman, too, was ridiculous. What

was it? Mrs. Blunt could only imagine it was because Joanna saw beauty in reality — reality in simplicity — and love everywhere.

She went home with her arms full of roses. They lay in her lap as she drove up to London and their appeal was irresistible. When she got home she tied up a bunch — the gift of arranging flowers was hers — and sent it round to Miss Column's house — for Miss Don, and wrote on a slip of paper, "From an old woman who has fallen in love with Up and Down," and when she went to bed that night she told Frankland, her maid, Paul's old nurse, where she had been and what she had done. How she had gathered roses while she might, and what she had done with the roses. Frankland's lip trembled, and there were tears in her eyes. About the young lady there was nothing said. And in that self-restraint Mrs. Blunt found virtue. Frankland would rather have had opposition. She was ready to fight for Mr. Paul. And she wanted his mother to fight, too, and to say she was going to fight. But instead she said, "Good-night, Frankland," and Frankland said, "Good-night, ma'am."

"Frankland?"

Frankland stopped: her attitude a question. "You will go straight to bed. It is late. Mr. Paul will not come to-night?"

"Yes, ma'am." And the old woman smiled and the woman in bed doubted her, and had good reason to doubt her, for outside on the staircase she sat

and kept watch. She knew Mr. Paul was only waiting a word from his mother. She knew he had gone to the theatre: she knew that so soon as he got back to Miss Column's house he would find the roses and would come round to thank his mother. So she waited. On these very stairs she had waited many a time when the boy had been coming home from school. Those days of blessed memory, sacred to hundreds and thousands of women who have been nurses. Now she listened: she heard the hall-door opened — the key withdrawn from the lock — the door shut. She heard some one coming upstairs — more than one — there was whispering — hesitation — gentle encouragement. She peeped over the banisters and saw that he was not alone: his arm was round a girl. She went down three steps at a time and stood waiting — her heart melting within her.

"Frankie, you?" exclaimed Paul; "see what I've brought. Take care of her while I go to my mother." And he bundled the girl into the arms of the old nurse — who was ready enough — whose arms were greedy for young things to fill them — and he went to his mother.

"Let's look at you, miss," said Frankland, drawing the girl nearer the electric lamp.

Milly laughed under the ordeal of the old woman's close scrutiny, but the old woman did n't laugh. Under the light Milly could see the trembling lip, the anxious face. The old woman gazed long and earnestly, and at the end of it all said, "Umph!"

— which should have been disconcerting enough, but with Frankland Milly felt no fear: her fingers closed over the hand of the old woman, and hand in hand they sat.

"It's those devourin' lions I'm thinkin' of," said Frankland at last. "You will deliver him from the jaws of the lion." So it appeared that, in the eyes of Frankland, it is better for a man that he marry a Milly than that he be eaten of lions.

"There'll be a fuss, miss," she said, "but your looks are all on your side. A fuss there's bound to be, but I'll fight for you, though I'm no Radical like his father is — it'll be difficult to persuade him —"

When Paul sat on his mother's bed and said, "You darling!" there seemed nothing else in the world that could matter. He was still hers — and she was happy until he said: "May I bring her now?" Then she remembered she was in bed — and sixty years of age — and it was not in bed she would choose to meet her future daughter-in-law, if daughter-in-law she must be. "Please?" he said; "I long for you to see her, for her to see you." And he was at the door before she could say anything.

He opened it and outside stood a girl. He brought her into the room, a slim, shy, delicious-looking child, very like one of Joanna's roses — and she and Paul knelt beside poor Mrs. Blunt's bed — and what chance had she? Dignity even was denied her, and the mother, vanquished, held out her hands and

Paul took one prisoner and Milly the other, and when they released them she withdrew them wet with tears.

Directly these impossible people had gone, she jumped out of bed — amazingly active for one of her years — and looked at herself in the glass, which showed her to be not so old as people might think. Then she got back into bed, glad that Paul had a mother who looked so well in bed. But she was shaken; she had capitulated too easily. If she had been certain her hair looked all right she would have held out longer. Now there was Paul's father to persuade and Milly's father to establish.

Meanwhile Frankland sat and thought. There must be some way out through such grace and beauty as this girl possessed. By the following morning she no longer despaired — she had found a way out, if through the door of escape there was room for improbability and impossibility to squeeze. With high hope in her heart she knocked at her mistress's door. Mystery was written all over her — excitement in her eyes — triumph even.

"What's the matter, Frankland? You look very pleased," said Mrs. Blunt.

Who would be anything else with Mr. Paul looking as he had looked? To that Mrs. Blunt made no answer. She had repented of her weakness of last night and was strong in the power of a morning's resentment. Committees were forgotten: the bubble of equality burst.

"But, ma'am!" Up went the hands and the eyebrows of Frankland. "The likeness!"

"What likeness?"

(Frankland would have bartered her soul for Master Paul.)

"You remember," she almost whispered, — "you remember me telling you about my sister's sister-in-law's sister — and her lodger — years ago — eighteen or nineteen years ago?"

Which of course Mrs. Blunt did not remember. "Yes, ma'am, the young lady that died a lodger in the house of the sister of my sister-in-law's sister."

Mrs. Blunt felt this was a little more involved than it need have been. Less intricacy and she would still have been fogged enough.

"And left a baby and no trace — her husban' bein' drowned — or supposed to be — since he made no sign."

Mrs. Blunt was bewildered: but vaguely she remembered some man being drowned. Frankland had told so many stories in her day — but on this one she insisted. Mrs. Blunt must remember it. "Please, ma'am —" as much as to say, "do make the effort."

Mrs. Blunt made the effort and succeeded. So she said! Whereupon Frankland, encouraged, believed in, upheld, unravelled her tangled skein of marvellous coincidences. She had seen that lady — mind! And had never forgotten her — who would? She had never thought to see her like again. And now she

had. She paused to give Mrs. Blunt time to say, Where?

It was up to her to say it. She said it. "Where?"

"Here!" said Frankland.

"When?" asked Mrs. Blunt, playing her part to perfection.

"Last night."

Like two children they were, telling each other stories — aiding and abetting one another — knowing the stories to be fairy tales. Mrs. Blunt asked Frankland what she meant? Meaning, what was she driving at? Frankland was driving a coach and four through the laws of chance and probability. She meant this — that Master Paul's young lady was the child of that lady whose baby had been born in the house of — Frankland shut her eyes.

"Wait, Frankland," said Mrs. Blunt, as much as to say, "Spare me the genealogical tree. Who was the husband of that lady?" without that the story might be waste of time and not worth the telling.

Frankland gave a name most desirable. Mrs. Blunt caught at it like a drowning man at a straw. But why should Frankland suppose this girl to be that baby?

"The likeness to the mother," said Frankland.

"And the lady of whom you speak was married to the father of the child whom you remember?" asked Mrs. Blunt, liking the story well enough.

"Undoubtedly, ma'am; the sister of my sister-in-law's sister had always insisted upon that."

"And why?"

Frankland set out to show why it was quite certain that they had been married. The name she had mentioned was that of a young man who had been drowned at sea. That was easily proved. It was believed he had been married — secretly married. His parents not knowing to whom, their advertisements failing to discover the wife or even an impostor. The young lady in the lodging was known to be married, but her husband never appeared and made no sign — therefore he must have been drowned. Any husband, however bad, can send money, but a drowned one — Frankland's best effort this — No! So putting two and two together she had proved that these two unknown creatures must have been the parents of this unclaimed child. "Nothing could be plainer, ma'am," said Frankland. Her lip trembled. Her heart sank. Was Mrs. Blunt going to believe? Mrs. Blunt could not make up her mind. Frankland had always remembered stories well. Now her memory had come in useful. To make the story of any real use, Mrs. Blunt knew it must be ascertained what had become of the baby. That was the crux. Frankland was ready. What were the country places of England for if not to shelter orphan babies? There were thousands of cottages that might have sheltered this child. England was a big place — in that way. The baby? Oh, the baby had gone to a brother of Frankland's sister-in-law — and his wife in the country. Their name was —

Now it flashed across Mrs. Blunt's mind that unless the name of the woman to whom the baby had been sent was Don, the story was no good and no help. No better than the thousands of other stories Frankland remembered. So Mrs. Blunt suggested the name of Don. Fixed Frankland with a stony glare, pinned her down to Don, and Frankland gave in at once — said the name had been Don — vowed it had been. Of course it had been — and triumphantly was! It could not have been anything else. "Could it, ma'am?"

"No other name would have done as well," admitted Mrs. Blunt.

So between them Mrs. Blunt and Frankland gave Milly not only a welcome, but a father, drowned, but still a father; and a mother, dead, but a mother for all that; and Frankland knew by instinct they had been married — and saw the likeness at once in the child to the mother. Most old nurses would do as much for the boy they love, and Frankland really believed her story. In that she was more fortunate than Mrs. Blunt.

When any doubt crept into the mind of Frankland she met it by saying — a baby had been born at the house of her — etc., etc. — she had not the strength to go through it again — and every woman who had seen it had proclaimed it, every inch of it, the child of at least a duchess. It did go to live in the country, when the sister of her — etc., etc., — died, with a woman whose name, so far as Frankland

knew, might be anything, so why not Don? Why not?

Frankland felt as bewildered as a bulldog puppy would feel in the nest of a hedgehog. Both might with equal truth exclaim — "A world bristling with difficulties, this. It is n't that I mind fighting — but it's hard to kick against the pricks!"

XXVIII

Mrs. Blent, when she heard Paul was going to marry Milly, said it was curious a family should want to go down when it had just climbed up.

"Sliding down," Hope called it, and Mrs. Blent was not sure about that. If Mrs. Blunt's story were true — and Milly's face was corroboration enough — it was not so much of a come-down after all for the Blunt family. Mrs. Blunt, of course, was of good family; but she had become a Radical in order to marry Mr. Blunt (said she liked it, indeed), so she could not say much now. Having delivered herself of these sentiments, Mrs. Blent complacently folded her hands and said to Hope: "You look hot, Hatty dear."

If there was one thing Hope hated more than another, it was to be told by her mother that she looked hot. Hot? Of course she was hot — with indignation. Was she justified in allowing Paul to marry a girl who had done what Milly had done? What she had done Hope did not really know. Joanna knew and had rejoiced to discover it, and Elizabeth Column knew and had condoned it, whatever it was. But they were impossible people. Hope was saved all responsibility by Paul coming himself to tell her he was going to marry Milly. He knew Hope would be pleased. He and she had been such

friends. He reminded her they were cousins, that cousins were like brothers and sisters.

"With such a delightful difference," suggested Hope.

Paul did not ask her to do more than suggest the difference. He said, never having had a sister, he had found a sister in her. She smiled. It was all very delightful, of course: but she had grown so accustomed to believe her heart broken that she was not anxious to be too easily cured, although the gift of healing were Paul's. He as a physician might have assured her that she had never been dangerously hurt — that the pain she had suffered had not been real pain — that she had not the power to feel real pain; but he did not. He was too wise. He asked her instead to help Milly. He told her Milly was afraid of her. That she admired her so much: had always admired her; looked up to her as something so far above her — so good — envied her —

"Poor little Milly!" said Hope, at last. She was glad to be thought wonderful — and good — and stand-offish and superior. After all, she would have hated to go to Africa — to spend her life in deserts and swamps and in the strange company of wild beasts, birds, and insects, and black men. She was quite certain Paul and Milly would n't dress for dinner, and would possibly sleep in their clothes, under the stars of heaven. They were quite impossible. Her world was peopled with impossible creatures. So she patted Paul's hand and wished him

happiness and hoped poor little Milly would make him happy. Then, with the consciousness of her goodness overpowering her sense of judgment, she solemnly asked Paul to be kind and gentle to Milly — and patient. "Patient, dear Paul — remember her upbringing!"

And Paul departed with her blessing tucked under his arm, as it were, and she sat wrapt in thought, looking very seraphic and statuesque, calm and good, wondering whom she should marry. She was glad to be rid of those deserts. Miles and miles she had ridden in her dreams (and she was no rider) across sandy deserts — on a sandy camel with sand in her eyes — in her sandwiches, in her hair.

"Well, dear," said her mother, "perhaps it is a come-down for the Blunts, after all."

"Reversion, that's all," said Hope.

And her mother went away impressed. She was sure Hope was right, but to make certain she looked it up in the dictionary — 'Return to the wild state after domestication.' Reversion, there was something to say for it, thought Mrs. Blent. To love the smell of a freshly baked crusty loaf was reversion, not greed.

That night she lay awake in bed and thought it all out. After all — she argued to herself — the Blunts were rich, but that was no reason they should marry family. She herself was rich, but she would not care to marry any one above her. To feel herself superior to Father was one of her pleasures in life.

Why should money make people like things they would n't naturally like? She was exactly what she had always been — really — if only people knew it. Paul's mother was, of course, a real lady. She had married beneath her, but she had drawn her husband up — riches and all — until anybody would be taken in by him. So it could be done. If Paul took Milly away for a year or two, she would come back as good as any one. She had it in her. She was n't an ordinary girl. Any one could see that. Of course, Paul was his mother's son; but he was so accustomed to wild animals and to people without clothes, that he was n't so particular as he would have been if he had stayed at home and become a Member of Parliament. They had to be careful who they married because of their constituents and their votes. Conservatives would lose by marrying one way; Labour members lose by marrying another. Politics were a matter of class, Mrs. Blent knew that. Of course, she knew, too, that money went a long way, if not all the way. But she said, and held to it, that it really had no right to expect anything more than it could give. Paul had only one grandfather whose portrait could possibly have been painted. Milly might have two if the truth were known.

Mrs. Blunt, of course, had two grandfathers whose portraits had been painted and possibly four great-grandfathers — that made six family portraits. With the grandmothers and great-grandmothers,

twelve. If Mrs. Blunt had married her equal there would have been twelve more portraits, in all twenty-four. Instead of which Paul had only the twelve: and it was his father who boasted of those — not his mother. Mr. Norman, now, had twenty-four of his own; Lady Agnes twenty-four of her own, if they went back only so far as to great-grandparents. That made forty-eight — forty-eight: that made a gallery. A portrait gallery! Money alone could n't do that — with truth and honesty.

Mrs. Blent fell asleep with a smile on her lips. She was thinking of a portrait gallery hung with forty-eight of Father's ancestors. It could not be — done — for the — money — But she dreamed of a gallery hung with old masters — known to us all — portraits of Mr. Potts, the painter; Mr. Bun, the baker; Mr. Bung, the brewer; Mr. Chips, the carpenter; Mr. Block, the barber. And none of them were at home.

"Then will you give me — Mrs. Potts, the painter's wife? Thank you! And Miss Potts, the painter's daughter?"

"Not at home."

"Bother!"

"Will you — give *me* — Mrs. Potts, the painter's wife — and" — here was the danger zone — "Milly, the Dons' daughter —"

XXIX

Mr. Blunt, Paul's father, in his library — asleep — reading. Through the open window came the sound of the mowing-machine. Through the open window the scent of the newly mown grass and other scents and other sounds belonging to the country — things we love. A peaceful world was Mr. Blunt's that morning, in which were no marriages, no Millys. A rich man at rest — surrounded by things of beauty. The room — in which he read, sleeping — was spacious. On the walls hung beautiful portraits. Not having ancestors of his own, he was not too proud to buy them from others who were too proud to sell — had they not been obliged to do so. Over the mantelpiece was a Gainsborough — the portrait of an ancestress of Mrs. Blunt. She had not been paid for — except in Mrs. Blunt's nose — a trifle too long — and therefore was doubly precious. She smiled down upon the man her descendant had chosen to marry and would have crowned him with the wreath of flowers she held if she could have made up her mind — to do it. A graceful indecision hers — exquisitely painted. The blueness of her eyes had in no wise faded. Paul's were as blue. It was very noticeable, too, the likeness between them.

Mrs. Blunt came into the room, opening the door

softly, and shutting it softly. She peeped round the back of her husband's chair. "He is reading," she said to herself, and sat down very quietly, so as not to wake him. Then, tiring, she took the bellows from the place where they stood and blew very softly upon the back of his neck — there are other ways of waking those who sleep, none gentler. Susceptible to draughts he stirred — awoke. "Ah, my dear," he said, "these fellows know what they are writing about —" And he closed the monthly magazine he had been reading.

"It takes brains to appreciate theirs," said Mrs. Blunt.

"What is it you want?" Mr. Blunt put out his hand.

His wife took it and shook it, and told him he was absurd. There were several things she wanted. She began by asking for the least of these — a new cottage for the laundry-maids so that the old laundry-maid — now growing past her work — should — "Well, die where she has lived — it comes to that."

"She wants to do that?"

"Above all things."

"To die?"

"No, to live."

"Well, well —"

"I may ask Mr. Lane to make out the plans, then?"

"Let me see them, first, before you ask him." And he held out his hand. A roll was produced from the

depths of an armchair. They were seen, studied, and approved.

"You spoil me," said Mrs. Blunt, the plans rolling up with a rattle. She expected to be spoilt, being unspoilable.

"I imagine," said her husband, being now wide awake, "this is but a beginning; am I right?"

"The cottage hospital is growing too small," his wife admitted.

"I am sorry to hear that. It means illness is increasing."

"No, it does not. It is the maternity wing I should like to add to. The mothers appreciate it so enormously."

"Suppose we agree; what next?"

"Before you agree I want you to understand about these babies of mine."

"I understand all about them. You want to make the mothers of to-day even less capable of bringing up their children than they already are."

"No, I want to teach them."

"Mothers in my day knew — by instinct — how to bring up their children."

"Instinct — is now not good enough — it is almost — let us say — vulgar. It must be replaced by knowledge."

"Very well — what next?"

"For to-day, that is all," said Mrs. Blunt, knowing herself a coward. She sailed out of the room very much in the same manner that she had sailed out of

Mrs. Don's cottage, but then she had been brave. Now she hedged, telling herself she was perhaps not so much a coward as a wise woman. She had decided her tactics were wrong — it was wiser at the moment to retreat.

Down the telephone she told Paul she had not yet spoken to his father. She was waiting an opportunity. "Paul, are you there?"

He was there.

"You will leave it to me?"

He would.

The next morning Mrs. Blunt came down to breakfast armed with a handful of letters, among them Paul's. She was excited, buoyant, confident. To manœuvre was to forewarn. Yesterday Mr. Blunt had been prepared for something. Now the position must be rushed. To induce consent was to suggest opposition. "I have had a letter from Paul," she said, and she busied herself about the coffee-pot and the tea-pot.

"From Paul. Good!" said his father. "He is coming down, I hope."

"He is coming down if his engagements allow."

"Or I allow his engagement, eh?"

"You know?"

"Yes, I know."

"What do you know?"

"What is there to know?"

"The Lamports lost their only son" — Mrs. Blunt shut her eyes — she could remember better

with eyes shut — "he was drowned — he had married, it seems, a charming girl — she died, leaving a child — it is to that child Paul is engaged — the Lamports are charming."

"What information have you that the Lamports have not? Who discovered this grandchild? It's no good, my dear; you did it very well. I am relieved to find with what difficulty you lie — I have always known it was the thing you were least good at — to have found you better at it would have grieved me even more than to find Paul engaged. It was Frankland's doing, I know, and she did it very well. It is quite possible Lamport has a grandchild of whose existence he is unaware. He has found himself possessed of two Sir Joshua Reynolds, and one Gainsborough, which he did n't know he possessed. But Frankland is not so infallible as an art dealer — and perhaps not less honest. But it is Milly Don we have to accept and not Millicent Lamport — or anything like it."

"And where did you hear?"

"Agnes Norman told me — moreover, she showed me the girl."

"You have seen her?"

"I saw her — she did n't see me."

"And what did you think?"

"She might easily be a Lamport: she cannot possibly be a Don."

"Then you approve?"

"No, I disapprove — just as much as your peo-

ple disapproved of your marrying me — but you married me —"

"Does that mean that you will consent?"

"It means — that I leave it to Paul — if he chooses to do what his mother before him did — he must."

"You have made me very happy."

"In allowing your son to marry a nobody — it is the illegitimacy that makes it hard."

"Hardest of all for the child," said Mrs. Blunt, shutting her eyes again, "who is not asked if it can bear the burden — the child is the least of all people to blame — if the girl were mean or cruel — and jealous and small — " what was it Joanna had said? — " I should be sorry — there is just this to be said, Mrs. Don knows nothing about the child, so why should we suppose there is anything against her? She has triumphed over all her difficulties, why should we be stumbling-blocks in her way?"

"Exactly! Why put Lamports in her path —"

"Where did you see her?"

"Agnes Norman took me to St. Paul's Cathedral — the child was there — I watched her at her prayers — it seemed indecent somehow or other. I only looked for a second. She is very graceful — prays earnestly, and her hair grows prettily. Paul was kneeling beside her. I am not sure he was n't worshipping her. I won't go so far as to say he was, but she undoubtedly was worshipping the God of her fathers — I don't know that old Lamport owns to

one — how far that goes against Frankland I don't know."

"My dear, you have always been one of the most delightful men I ever met."

"Why *one?* Why not two?"

"There is Paul — you must not forget him."

Mr. Blunt thought it very unlikely he should do that.

XXX

In the great gallery at Lamport there hangs a portrait of Delia — wife of the third Baron Lamport of Lamport. And the wife of that much distracted and greatly loving man was a woman beautiful enough to stir the hearts of more men than one — a veritable fairy of grace and beauty — a being born to charm and delight, and Delia did what she was born to do. And did it well, enslaving all she came across. Of which you may read in the diaries of those of her friends and relatives who sought to put down in black and white the delight of her and her manifold ways. It was no easy thing to do. No man succeeded so well in catching her charm as the man who painted her, for he had on his palette red and white, and rose madder, and blue, rich colours, for the mixing; and delicate tints. Whereas the diarists had but words. And no words could suggest the delicacy and subtlety of those shadows beneath her eyes that enhanced their brilliancy. No words express the tender mobility of the mouth, that smiled and was at the same time sweetly grave — in both ways most appealing. The picture had been painted in the early days of her married life. What sum of money had been paid the painter is not known: but most assuredly he had painted for love. The tree under which Delia had stood to be painted is still

shown and believed, by some, to be the same tree. She was painted in a muslin gown, her hair bound by a blue ribbon. Another ribbon of blue encircled her waist, both dull rivals in colour to her eyes. In her hands she held a wounded bird; tenderly she caught it to her breast. It was safe; for that the smile. It had been hurt; for that the grief and for that, too, the tears in her eyes.

Joanna to Lamport for the day. Led there by Fate: borne there by steam: strong forces, both of them. She conveyed thither four and fifty school-children, most of them clean; a few pretty. But not one of them caring one jot for a beauty dead a hundred and fifty years since. But Joanna cared enormously. She could not tear herself away from the picture gallery, although out in the park a Round went merrily, provided for the amusing of the children, and lemonade, too. Both of which things would no doubt vastly have entertained Delia.

A little girl pulled shyly at Joanna's skirt. It was lovely outside; people were laughing like anything. Listen!

"Don't you like the pictures, Phœbe?" asked Joanna.

"It's Milly Don," whispered the child. Milly had been a sight common enough in the village. No need to go by train and wear a starched frock and have your face scrubbed and soap in your eyes to see her. "It's only Milly," repeated the child. Valuable evidence this — very exciting to Joanna. She thought

of nothing else all day, although she rode on the Merry-go-round. You can do that and think, if the power of concentration be yours, and the action not too eccentric.

The next day Joanna went up to London to see Elizabeth, and laid certain facts before her — and a proposal, too. Which proposal was that Milly should be got, by some means or other, — on some pretext or other, — to Lamport. She must be dressed in white muslin and a blue ribbon must bind her hair. Elizabeth nodded, seeing in that no great difficulty. Any one on a given day was allowed in to the picture gallery at Lamport.

"But," said Joanna, "on a given day the family is not there. See?"

Elizabeth said it was just as easy to go on a wrong day and plead a stupid mistake and trust to luck.

"Luck?" asked Joanna, feeling in her pocket and clinking coins together.

"Well, you know!" said Elizabeth. "Then if any member of the family should chance to see Milly — and if there was any likeness — theirs the business to see it and say so."

All was arranged. Milly in muslin. A blue ribbon binding her hair. She felt a fool. But Elizabeth said, what matter that?

Joanna, Elizabeth, and Milly went to Lamport. Elizabeth in the fond hope of being mistaken for an American — to whom all things are forgiven in sight-seeing. She dressed as an American woman she

knew dressed. Vowed to exhibit a like intelligence; sworn to ask as many questions. Joanna, more or less in the background, was to take notes — to catch any expression there might be, of astonishment; to seize any moment that might seem opportune, for the prosecution of her idea.

The bell at the door was seized and pulled by Elizabeth. The door was opened by as unresponsive a man as ever lived in a castle — as ever opened its door. Even Elizabeth was daunted. If she tipped, it might be Lamport himself she tipped: if she gave in, it might be to a butler she gave in. So she did what George Washington would have done in her place. She said she was from America, and with truth he might have said it. And having said it, he might still have remained an example for true speaking to all people, of all times; but not Elizabeth. She had lied. However, a quick reward was hers. The door was swung back and in she walked, followed by Joanna, by Milly.

It is possible Milly would have come upon the picture and seen herself as others saw her had not a little bird been flying about in the hall, distracted with fright — banging itself against the window, the ceiling! She must catch it and put it outside. She caught it, and quickly passing through the hall she found her way out into the garden — and there she stood for a moment, under the very tree, with the bird caught to her breast.

Was there a Lamport to see? Not one! "My

kingdom for a Lamport," cried Elizabeth in her heart of hearts. To the man she said, "Where is the family?"

"The family is not in residence to-day."

"But to-day is not the day."

"Yes, madam, to-day is *the* day."

"What day?"

"The day on which Delia, Lady Lamport, returns."

"Returns?" asked Elizabeth — her flesh creeping. She looked at Milly. Had the man seen the likeness?

"She was fond of dancing in life, was my lady. Once a year she returns and dances in the gallery; she and her friends."

"You have seen her?"

"The family does not intrude on these occasions; the house is left to her ladyship."

"Does no one see her? The servants?"

"Her ladyship and her friends require no refreshment. She dances. We do not dance — attendance upon her."

"Do you see anything remarkable here?" asked Elizabeth, taking Milly by the arm.

"The hat is wrong."

"You see it, then, the likeness?"

"To the picture — it's a favourite with ladies. There's never a fancy-dress ball in the neighbourhood but what my lady goes to it — in counterfeit."

"Oh," said Elizabeth. She, Joanna, and Milly

were bowed out: desperately disappointed, two of them. But perfectly determined that beside them walked Delia Lamport. Shown her own likeness, she saw nothing.

"Can't you see it, Milly?" asked Joanna.

"See that it's like me?" asked Milly. "Why, no, I could never look like that. Is n't she lovely?"

Milly was just as lovely. That was the maddening part of the whole thing. It had all been perfectly stage-managed. Milly dressed the part to perfection. The bird even in her hands. Under the very same tree, and no Lamport.

"It does n't alter the fact," said Elizabeth. "Paul Blunt is not marrying Milly Don — that is certain."

"But he *is* marrying Milly Don. It seems to me Paul is the only one who is perfectly satisfied that she should be Milly Don. I don't know why we are worrying," said Joanna.

"You are impossible, Joanna, my good woman! If you had your way there would be Dons, and nothing but Dons in the world."

"There might be worse people," said Joanna. "We have done our best. We have failed. But Milly marries Paul, and that, after all, is all that matters."

"I wish I knew," said Elizabeth.

"But I do know," said Joanna.

"What do you know?"

"That Milly is undoubtedly the Lamports' grandchild."

"You know that?"

"Of course."

"But that's all we want to prove."

"But we can't."

"Why not?"

"Because they say they never had one."

"But —"

"There is no but —"

"Can't we make them see?"

"That they had? It would be a dangerous precedent."

"How?"

"Supposing we all had grandchildren thrust upon us in our old age?"

"But we could n't if we had n't any."

"That's what the Lamports say."

"But they are impossible."

"We are all that. I should love to have grandchildren thrust upon me."

It had been a hot day, and Elizabeth was cross. Joanna annoyed her, and Milly was only anxious to get back to Paul.

Milly did not get back to Paul; Elizabeth grew crosser, and Joanna more and more annoying. And all because the last train had gone when the three women walked into the station. Is there anything more deserted than a country railway station after the last train has gone through? Anything more maddening than the thought of a guard at peace, smoking a pipe, and a porter at work digging pota-

toes? It was ridiculous that it should have been the last train, said Elizabeth. But she had no say in the matter. The station was built for Lamports, not for Elizabeth. The train ran for Lamports, not for Elizabeth. Elizabeth was not nearly grand enough to have a railway station all to herself — a branch line all to herself. She was ready to give any one a piece of her mind. There was no one to take it. "We must go to the inn then," she said.

They went to the inn. There they hardly gained admittance. Elizabeth had to do the American all over again — and handsomely, and when she had done it the innkeeper admitted that the rooms were empty and His Lordship away. So Joanna, Elizabeth, and Milly took the rooms. They were oak-panelled: at night dimly mysterious and ghostly. Elizabeth did not sleep. She lay awake thinking. Among other things of Lamport and of Delia dancing in the great gallery. Why should n't she see Delia dance? She was not of the family, therefore its honour was not hers. In a moment she was out of bed, dressing. In a few moments she was dressed: there was her prayer-book — she must take that. She had left it in London. Bother! It made it very awkward. She had Sunday Zoo tickets — in London, too. She peeped into Milly's room as she passed. It was all quiet. Milly was in bed. Joanna she did not disturb. It would be like Joanna to be praying at the open window. She prayed anywhere. Even in Piccadilly she said she could, if she wanted to. There

was need for it. Joanna's window mercifully did not look upon the road Elizabeth would take. Joanna had chosen the room that looked the other way — over the orchard, through which ran a stream.

Down the stairs crept Elizabeth. She opened the door easily — the great bolt was a velvety bulrush, what a good idea! — so easily replaced, when broken. She stepped out into the silvered night. It was delicious. Daylight almost — with a mysteriousness that daylight holds not. Lamport by moonlight! Tip-toed Elizabeth down the road. The poplars laughed as she passed, shaking their silver leaves at her. The aspens danced — everything danced. Even the shadows danced out of her way. The stars winked at her. No wonder on such a night as this danced Delia. Elizabeth could dance herself, given half a chance. She would take it, why not? She took off her skirt and laid it silver-bound in the road — then put it on again. She decided she had not time, and besides, the harebells were ringing out of time. The tune was all right if only they would keep together — they lacked colour and coherence. She reached the gates of Lamport; through them she stole, and so quickly did she run that in a few moments she reached the house. It lay like a soft pink pearl in a silver casket. Over the silvered-green grass she crept — leaving dark tracks behind her — right up to the windows of the great gallery, and peering through the window she saw Delia dancing. Elizabeth turned and kissed a magnolia who stood

watching beside her. The magnolia said, "Thank you," so nicely. It had never been kissed before.

All silver was Delia — bathed in silver — it ran from her feet as she danced — it ran from her fingers, from her hair. Elizabeth drew in her breath and gazed. It was Milly who danced, not Delia, and with her danced a young man — in satin coat — silver and pearl, and embroidered waistcoat, diamond and rose. His arm was round her, and together they floated — floated was the only word that described the exquisiteness of their movement. Elizabeth turned in an ecstasy to find at her side the man who, earlier in the day, had opened to her the door of Lamport. Butler or no butler — she took his hand and placed within it a large silver piece — it dripped silver like everything else. She closed his hand, then hers on his. The dripping silver he caught in his hat — which he held in his other hand — butler or no butler, Lamport or no Lamport, she stood with him so — hand in hand — and together they watched Milly — Delia — dance. Then Elizabeth laying her head on this man's shoulder murmured, "She is your grandchild, say she is."

"Indeed, she is — ours and no other's," he answered.

"You see the likeness?"

"I see the likeness — as no other shall ever see it."

"Then it is Delia who marries Paul?" — Elizabeth triumphed.

"Chapter and verse, please — and the epistle!"

XXXI

BACK to London the next morning went Elizabeth, Joanna, and Milly — Elizabeth saying nothing of her adventure — thinking she must have dreamed. If it had n't been for the man — butler or Lamport — she would have tried to believe it true — no dream; it had been so delicious. Any one seeing Milly dance as she had seen her — even if it were a dream — would have known her to be Delia.

No one could say Joanna and Elizabeth and Frankland had not done their best to establish the child's claim. Mrs. Blunt doubted that any three women could have done more, with the material they had. When Frankland talked to herself, which being old she did, she called Milly, "Miss Lamport, daughter of the Honourable Ralph Lamport, who was drowned at sea, and grand-daughter of Lord Lamport. And just like the family, too. No getting out of it!"

But they did get out of it. And no one could blame them. They knew their son had never had a child. So how could they be convinced? Why should they be?

Mrs. Don did n't mind one way or the other. The child was the same to her as ever — she had always been a kind of a stranger — being in her ways so superior — but affectionate always. Widow Waysey

had lots to talk about and that kept her amused. Useful, too, she was with her good memory. Welcome was any one to take from its store what they would. Stored in it — quite safe — never forgotten — never till now remembered — was the fact that Mrs. Don had said quite distinctly that the name of Milly's mother had been — no, the name Milly's mother had given the child was — Amelia! Did n't Mrs. Don remember that! She must; why, it was as clear as if she had said it yesterday. Widow Waysey urged Mrs. Don to make the effort. Come to think of it, Mrs. Don did remember. That was why she had called the child Milly — short for Amelia. Of course, as soon as Joanna heard that, she wrote it to Elizabeth, and Elizabeth wrote back and said it was conclusive proof. The name had not been Amelia, but Delia. And all this fuss and excitement over a thing that did not in the least concern Paul. It was Milly he wanted to marry.

Hope wanted to marry Paul. How much she wanted it she had not realised until she saw Milly's happiness. Milly rose triumphant over all difficulties. Her beauty carried her everywhere. Her simplicity won through, and Hope was left out. It was that she could not bear. She had a stormy interview with Paul. Manners would have said she had n't it in her to storm. But she had. She gained nothing and lost everything she had wanted to gain. From Paul she went straight to Manners, to his room. That she should come there did not in the least disconcert

him. The bed made into a sofa — the washing-stand into a sideboard, and if they had not he would not have minded. There was always tea for two and enough to eat for one at least. But Hope had come neither to eat nor to drink, but to marry and that quickly. Here was copy with a vengeance! Even the money for the special licence was in her purse. He had promised — she reminded him — if ever she wanted a home that he would give it her. She must be married before Milly. She did not say that. She said she must be married — just that!

"My dear child," said Manners; "I said I would marry you — if I remember rightly — for copy — and I still will — but it will be for copy — is that enough? Is it good enough?"

It was good enough. She did not ask for more. She had asked more of Paul. He had refused to give it to her.

"It might be useful," mused Manners.

He had written stiffly, unnaturally — too hopefully — of married life — not in the least understanding it. On eight hundred a year he had given a couple — in a short story — a flat in Mayfair — a Rolls-Royce and a villa on the Riviera. It was quite possible he overrated the possibilities of life on two hundred a year. Hope would put him right there.

"I had imagined marriage rather a wonderful thing," he said, — "an overwhelming experience — and I imagine it might still be that — if you loved me — or if I — loved you, just a little more than I

do. It would, perhaps, not take much to make that little more — if you were a little different — if you were more like Jomammy, for instance."

"I am sick of Jomammy," said Hope.

"Ah," said Manners. "That is perhaps what I mean — if you were more like Jomammy and I were more like" — he took a cigarette from his pocket and lit it; he blew out the match, watched it smoking — "let's say — Paul Blunt." He sprang to his feet and stood before Hope — daring her to say she did not wish him more like Paul.

"Hope," — he caught her by the wrists, — "Hope — swear by whatever God you acknowledge to be God — anything you believe to be bigger than yourself — that you do not love Paul Blunt. If you do not love him and you want some one to take care of you, I will take care of you — but it will be a hard life. There's my mother — I have always taken care of her — I can work — I am strong — but I'm a hopeless rotter — I have n't even the imagination to write truthfully of a woman proposing to a man. I should have brought into the scene strength and virility. You, the woman, I should have made a pathetic figure — beautiful in your distress. Your hands would, at least, have been clenched — your jaw set. You would have breathed deeply — passion would have distorted your features. Your hair would have come down — would have been bound to come down — unbound, I mean — to come down. The silence would have been tense. I

should have paced up and down the room — and, having paced once, — I should pace again. (So much per thousand words.) Having said all there was to say, I should have said it all over again. You would have sunk sobbing into a chair. Pitifully your hands would have shot out. They would grow thinner and thinner every moment, the bangles upon your wrists would be pathetic in their looseness — a looseness I should never have noticed before. Those wrists I should have wrung. Is that the expression? I should have left bruises on your white flesh wherever I touched you — purple bruises. You would have cried — saying, 'Be merciful — be good — Willing, you little know' — and I, taking your tired head in my weary arms, would have promised *any*thing — and you, raising your head, would have looked into my eyes and said: 'No, Willing or not Willing, I will not accept this' — and you would have given me back what without thought you had asked of me, and the day would have come (so much per thousand words) when you would have lived to thank me for what I had given you back — what you had given me back —"

"You said you would," said Hope.

"Then I'm hanged if I don't!"

And he did. They were married on the same day as were married Paul and Milly. Joanna went to Milly's wedding because she knew nothing of Hope's. For the same reason John 'married' Milly. He knew nothing of a service, badly read by an in-

different curate, which married Hope and Willing just as effectually as the words spoken in his golden voice bound Milly and Paul. And Paul married Milly because body and soul he loved her: and Willing married Hope — for another reason — copy if you like.

Hope wrote a letter to Mrs. Blent telling her of the marriage, and Mrs. Blent was sitting in her boudoir when she received it.

She was just back from the wedding of Paul and Milly. They had been married from the Blunts' house. "It's a funny world," thought Mrs. Blent; "Milly married from the bridegroom's house — and Hope married — from no house at all. Dear, dear, Hope married! And I was at Paul's wedding all the time! And Hope had no trousseau, and is married to that funny Mr. Manners — such a strange young man — and she asks for an allowance. Really, she belongs to the Templars more than to us. I never felt she was quite like a daughter. It was like being mother to a statue — almost. How beautiful Milly had looked. Not in the least like a statue. Any one would have thought she was a lady. Paul might have done better. But this Lamport story had caught fire, as it were. People seemed to like it. There was that diamond hair ornament — anonymous. I wonder who sent it. Poor Hope, no diamonds! You can't expect them if you are married on the quiet."

Mrs. Blent was still flushed. The house had been

hot. There had been Cabinet Ministers among the guests. The thought, therefore, of Mrs. Don in the background had been very disturbing (to Mrs. Blent). Milly should have left Mrs. Don in the background, grateful to her for showing such good sense and feeling. In the church she had watched — and perhaps prayed — from the gallery. And in the house she would have stayed on the staircase, but Milly had ferreted her out and had introduced her to a Cabinet Minister. "Mercifully not a Conservative," thought Mrs. Blent. "Being a Radical, it was possible he had himself at one time been very much as Mrs. Don was — or his mother had. It would n't have mattered at all if Mrs. Don had n't told him his collar had been 'ironed dry.' Poor Paul must have felt that." As Mrs. Blent was thinking on these things, the door opened and round it peeped Hammy.

"What is it, Hammy? I have n't any cake here."

Slowly Hammy walked towards his mother. Then, rushing the last few steps, he threw himself into her arms. "Whatever is it, Hammy?" she asked. Her frock would spot — certain to, being soft satin. She tried to raise him, but he clung to her. "What is it, child?"

"She's gone — she's gone — there's nothing in the wardrobe."

"Who, Hammy?"

"Hope — she said she loved me the best in the world — I want her."

"You want Hope? But you did n't have her long."

"That's why — she tucked me up — she likes Cousin Paul — they sat on my bed — and we had such fun."

That night Mrs. Blent said to Mr. Blent: "Hope married to that man! I was surprised to get her letter when I got back from Paul's wedding."

"So you have already said a hundred times this evening."

"Yes, but she was in love with Paul. That's the funny part of it."

"I can't give her more than two hundred a year, so don't ask me."

"It's very generous, dear," said Mrs. Blent — "I'm sure it is — considering." And Mrs. Blent slept — in time. Mr. Blent at once. He had nothing on his conscience. Hope had shrunk from him to the last.

Hammy tossed from side to side, and he cried in his sleep, when he did sleep, and he had breakfast in bed next morning for a very great treat, and it was n't one, because Hope had gone when she had promised not to.

"Be a good boy," said Nannie, "and we will go to Maskelyne and Cook's."

"They're not sisters," said Hammy.

And Nannie did n't say they were. "More likely to be brothers," she said cheerfully.

"No, they're not," said Hammy, refusing to be comforted.

"Well, great friends, dear," said Nannie. She had not cared much for Miss Hope. Children were funny with their likes and dislikes.

"Will Hope like being married, Nannie?"

"She won't like anything much for long, I should say, what with her chopping and changing of parents, every two minutes."

"Then, will she go away, just like she did when she told me she would n't?"

"I should n't be surprised."

"Tell me, Nannie — all the things in the world that *would* surprise you?"

In one moment Nannie's arms were round Hammy, and they were, indeed, wonderful, the things that would surprise Nannie — things no mortal eye had ever seen. There was no one in the wide world who would n't be surprised at them. Hammy looked up, smiling at Nannie, then his eyes closed and he was asleep.

"Did she take him away from his Nannie?" she crooned over the child. "Did she?"

If she did he was Nannie's again — and surely she had the better right to him.

XXXII

JOANNA could find out nothing about Hope and Willing. She went to Willing's room. It was 'To let,' with its folding bedstead and its washing-stand disguised. Of his mother Joanna knew nothing. A woman who had been Willing's neighbour spoke well of him — that she did; but she knew nothing of his relations, except with her, and most quiet and neighbourly they had been — always. She added that Mr. Manners was a real gentleman — money was n't everything.

"Not everything," murmured Joanna.

"Not by a long way," said the woman, looking Joanna up and down. She evidently thought she was saying the tactful thing. "Not by a long way!" she repeated. Even if she looked Joanna up and down from head to foot — twice over — it was n't a very long way.

Joanna then went to Maud Chandler's flat. It was let. Miss Chandler had gone to Australia — to a brother. "At least she said so." A charwoman she was who added that. She took a fancy to Joanna at once, so there was no stiffness between them and no secrets. Then Joanna — after thanking the charwoman and saying the attraction was mutual — bent her steps towards the Blents' house. She dreaded going there. To the home Hope had chosen

in preference to Up and Down. Joanna thought of the purpling woods of Up and Down, of its green slopes — its bewitching by-ways — and wondered that Hope should have chosen this. Between Hope and Joanna the Blents had builded a high wall. Joanna was too small to look over it and had not the strength to climb it. Hope had failed her, just as she, perhaps, had failed Hope. She felt shy of forcing herself upon her, yet she longed to hear she was happy. As she stood at the door of the Blents' house, the door was flung open and out came a little boy.

He stopped on seeing Joanna and said: "Oh, I say — have you rung?"

Joanna knew it must be Hammy, so she said: "Can you tell me where Hope is?"

"I don't know — she's gone — none of us know — it's no good asking *him*," jerking his head towards the butler, and he ran down the steps.

"Poor Hope," thought Joanna; "even Hammy had failed her."

As Joanna went into the hall the statues struck her as offering a cold welcome — some of them turned their backs on her. Others held out to her crowns — others wreaths; and she refused them all saying in her absent-minded way, "No, thank you!" At the top of the stairs stood Venus, crowned with electric lamps, just as Willing had described her. Joanna was shown into a room where every armchair, every sofa, was tightly upholstered in blue satin. Magnificent pink pelargoniums were carried

in the arms of Psyches and impeded the footsteps of Mercury. The scheme of colour had been Mrs. Blent's happiest inspiration. The sofa cushions were tied up with blue satin bows and pink satin bows. It all looked very pink and clean — like Hope. Very new — like the Blents.

Joanna stood in the middle of the room. In a long mirror between two windows she saw herself reflected. She had no business out of Up and Down. There she was known and excused. Here she was impossible.

The door opened and in came Mrs. Blent. She was upholstered very much as were the chairs and sofas. She looked, if anything, more uncomfortable than they did.

"Mrs. Tem-per-ler, you?" she said, holding out her hands.

"Where is Hope?" asked Joanna in her quick, shy way.

Mrs. Blent raised her eyebrows, her shoulders, her hands, as much as to say, what had she to do with Hope?

"She was really more yours than ours, Mrs. Templar. I am sure you must have felt that — I am sure we did, after all you did for her. The money you must have spent on her — sparing nothing — and what has she done in return?"

"Married a man she is fond of, I hope."

"Is she fond of any one?" asked Mrs. Blent.

"I think," said Joanna, "we must all feel a considerable amount of responsibility — if she is not."

"I'm sure it's very good of you to feel that after the way—after the curious way she has treated you."

"No, no," said Joanna, patting the smooth sofa, as she might have patted a horse or a dog. "Goodness does n't come into it, does it? It is hardly good of us to love — good for us, certainly it is. We loved Hope — less, perhaps, than you did."

"Oh — I would n't say that," said Mrs. Blent. "Strictly speaking, I can't say my husband did love her — she was so distant. If she had n't been he would have made her a larger allowance: he could afford to —" This was said with some pride: even now Mrs. Blent sought to impress Joanna.

"Made allowances for her?" asked Joanna.

"No — made her an allowance — You don't suppose Manners married her for nothing?"

Joanna was distressed. She always forgot money.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Blent, "perhaps he did — but after her marriage she wrote for an allowance."

"From what address?" asked Joanna.

"Oh — let me think — she gave an address — the banker, I think — I'm not sure. My husband said, 'Two hundred pounds — not more.' Of course, it's dreadfully little — not to you, perhaps, — but to us. It's her own fault."

"Poor, poor Hope," said Joanna; "it seems to me now she had so little chance — we failed her."

"Why did you send her to school?"

"Because I was so often told I was impossible. I wanted to do the best for the child. I did n't want

her to be brought up by impossible people. We never satisfied her —"

"Why impossible? You've got more out of life than I ever did. Who says they love me? My own children? Never. My friends? Never. They laugh at me, those above me, for being beneath them. Those beneath me for thinking myself above them. You failed with Hope because she was my child — and like me. Did you fail with Milly? With the Normans? With Jenny Don? With any one — never! When I go out of this world, who will be the worse for it? No one!"

"Don't say that," said Joanna, laying her hand on Mrs. Blent's. "If you lived in the country — gardened and kept goats and —"

"Oh, those goats! — I don't care for them. Hope did n't either."

"Well, something else, then; anything young and helpless."

"Goats are most destructive," said Mrs. Blent, playing with the wing on the foot of a bronze Mercury.

"Yes, they are all young once."

"I don't care for animals — or, for the matter of that — for children."

"I see," said Joanna. She paused, looked at Mrs. Blent for a second, and said: "There is so little else in the world — is there?"

She went, and Mrs. Blent waited till she had gone and then burst into tears.

John was very disappointed when Joanna came back without bringing news of Hope. He wanted to see her — wanted so much to see her. He was sitting out in the garden. He looked very frail; even after the separation of a day Joanna noticed a change.

"There were things I wished to say to her. She was not what your child would have been, Joanna."

"Nor what yours must have been."

"She did n't laugh enough, did she? She never told a story against herself. In that she was certainly the Blents' child. But she was a dear child — a very dear child — a very — clean child."

That night John was worse. By morning he scarcely knew Joanna — she was a loved presence — some one who was always there. For that the light in his face. Joanna thought it was another presence, not hers. Martha disagreed. Mrs. Templar had always come first with Mr. Templar. When John spoke he asked for Hope. Martha said Mrs. Paul Blunt had arrived last night at the Park. Would she do? She might! Joanna, thinking she might, sent for her. She came.

Joanna caught her in her arms. "You beautiful — happy child," she exclaimed. "He is very ill — he wants to see Hope. We cannot find her. It is possible, if he saw you, he might think it was Hope. It is only to make him happy — to set his mind at rest. If he sees you — something young — Do you mind?"

"Mind?" said Milly; "of course not — but what would — *she* do — if she saw him?"

That was a difficulty. Joanna did not know. She took Milly to the room and opened the door. John lay in bed — sleeping, it seemed. Gently Joanna went to the bed, followed by Milly.

"Kneel," said Joanna.

Milly knelt. "What would she do?" she whispered.

John stirred, opening half-seeing eyes — eyes that saw nothing so clearly as visions to which others are blind. He had always seen them. He put out his hand and laid it on Milly's bowed head. "My child — bless you — forgive me — my want of understanding."

Milly slipped her arms round him, as Hope would never have done. "Forgive me," she murmured.

"Say 'Daddy John,'" whispered Joanna.

"Daddy John — you were always so wonderful — to me."

"So wonder-ful," murmured John. Then, looking at Joanna, he repeated, "Wonderful — it's so wonderful — wonderful — hope, faith, but the greatest of these —"

Milly drew her arms away and left John and Joanna together.

And so John Templar passed over into another world as quietly as he had lived in a world that to him had always been so wonderful. It had contained every possible beauty — and Joanna.

Joanna was left to face a strange world out of which much of the wonder had gone. But not all. It was a new country, that was all. The glory was to the discoverer.

She and John had walked so long side by side: but there was no reason to grieve. He had gone on, that was all. He had often done it in Up and Down, and when he had found the way, he had turned and waved to her to come on. The path was all right! He must have left footmarks to guide her now. She would follow in those steps. So when Lady Agnes wrote and said she would come when dear Mrs. Templar felt able to see her, Joanna put on her hat and walked up to see Lady Agnes. And found her shy — for once in her life and constrained and a little awkward. Joanna looked just the same — as usual. So Lady Agnes told her husband later, and he nodded as much as to say he knew what Joanna had looked like.

"She talked about him, I suppose?" he asked.

"Talked about him? She talked of nothing else. What is it?"

"That makes her what she is? A sense of humour, I believe."

"When her husband has just died?"

"Even then. A sense of humour is, after all, a sense of proportion, is n't it?"

"She said," said Lady Agnes thoughtfully, "that John had only reached the goal for which he had been making all his life. He had come to the door,

through which we must all pass. It's all very well, my dear, but if you die I shall bear it abominably and make every one else miserable. As to a sense of proportion, you are bigger than anything in my life — and my life is bigger than anything in the world."

Such a confession of faith from his wife was a little overwhelming to Humphrey Norman. "Dear old thing," he said, patting the sleek head of his black spaniel — and Lady Agnes laughed. How would Joanna have taken that? How big was it? How small? In proportion what was she to the black spaniel in the affection of her husband?

For a whole day Joanna influenced her. She walked cautiously, thought kindly, and dreamed noble things of a door ajar. At the end of the day she banged the door to — and shook it to see that it was really tight shut. She could not face the night with that door even half open. She could not sleep if there was even a gleam of light.

When she went to John's funeral, she cried far more than Joanna cried. Again the sense of proportion must have been Joanna's. The question arose of Joanna leaving the vicarage. Mr. Norman begged her to stay. He would find another home for the new Vicar. Joanna hesitated.

"As a matter of fact," said Mr. Norman, "I doubt that the new man would live in it — it's so inconvenient."

Joanna said she would love to stay.

XXXIII

JOANNA got a letter one day from Paul. The swallows were building within sight of the dining-room window. She had been thinking of Milly. Here was news of her.

"It's Africky," said the postman, handing her the letter. "Queer place to write from — black postmen," he supposed —

Joanna opened the letter and read: —

My dear Mrs. Templar, — I can say what I like to you, and what I like to say to you I could hardly say to any one else in the world — not even to my dear mother, because in the best of mothers there is just the smallest feeling of jealousy, a jealousy that is born of love. I wish you could see Milly. The wild flower is growing into a very wonderful flower — it could hardly be more beautiful than it was — but besides beauty it has now an indescribable charm — a fragrance of mind. I feel entirely unworthy to have so beautiful a thing in my keeping. It is a great responsibility. Her mind is as delicate as the finest instrument. It responds to every touch. She "studies" (old Proser's word) hard. To see her sitting on an upturned bucket reading Plato would soften the heart of the Inland Revenue Office. She has a book for every mood and for the frogs, Aristophanes. She sings to the birds just as they sing to her, and whispers to the trees. I sometimes wonder what London will think of her. At present she thinks very little of London. She is a wonderful companion. Her sympathy is extraordinary

and her judgment sound. We often talk of you by starlight. She says starlight suits you. She adores black babies, and is very anxious to adopt one and bring it home to you. I shall not give you our address for fear you should cable "Do." She goes about with her hair down and looks about twelve. I wish you could see her. I said that before. I have nothing else to say. I want the whole world to see her and yet I want to keep her to myself. In a year's time we shall be back in Up and Down, where, of course, we shall find you? *Of course* you are staying on?

Joanna stayed on. The house had been repainted and repapered. To some of the top windows had been added bars. It was said she was going to adopt babies. The village hummed with the rumour.

"She could n't be happy without doin' something queer," said Widow Waysey.

Elizabeth in London heard of it and wrote to say she hoped it was n't true.

"Why?" wrote back Joanna.

Elizabeth wrote again to say she had met Hope in Manchester — at the railway station — by chance. She was much thinner. She said she was going to write to Joanna. So Joanna waited for Hope's letter. It came. She read it. At first with difficulty. The word 'Jomammy' was blurred. "What must you think of me, Jomammy?" That was difficult, easy enough the rest.

Well, here we are. Willing is working for a firm of electricians. It's quite a good business and he's getting on well. It is extraordinary how the business has gone

up since he went into it. He sells more lamps, and persuades more people to have more fittings than any one young man ever did before. He is quite as mad as ever he was. He went to a big house the other day and was alone with the "lady" of the house in her bedroom. He had just persuaded her, he says, to have the floor lighted, so that she could see to pick up pins at night — when, for copy, he turned the key in the door. To his horror the leading lady jumped out of the window. Mercifully it was only two feet from the ground, but she alighted on a sack of soot — such a thing to land on (they were going to put the soot on the lawn). Willing dived after her and hastily explained the situation. It turned out that the leading lady writes novels, too, and she and he are now collaborating. Otherwise Willing would have got the sack. Jomammy — Jomammy, I never knew about Daddy John. I am not worthy to be called his child.

HOPE.

P.S. Willing's mother is dead. It makes us better off. He is very cut up.

Needless to say, Jomammy was off to Manchester the next day. But Manchester knew not Willing. So she came back to Up and Down, very tired and very disheartened. She put a Delft mug on the window-sill in one of those rooms whose windows were barred, and into it in spring she put wallflowers, daffodils, tulips, and forget-me-nots; in summer, roses; in autumn, red leaves and berries from the hedges and woods of Up and Down; at Christmas — any child would guess what. On the sill, too, looking out of the window, watching, she put a golly-wog and a Teddy Bear: and for the look of

the thing — a real wax doll. In the room itself — well, any child would know straight off what things go to the making of a proper nursery, and Joanna's was that. In her empty, window-barred nursery she waited some years for Hope's children; and in the room where there should have been children she came — in time — to pray for the mothers of a whole world, in their desolation.

. . . .

In the summer of Nineteen Fifteen she went to London one day to attend a meeting — a little woman in mourning, with big grey eyes — just as she had been at the meeting years before when she had adopted Hope. Mrs. Blent was at the meeting, too, just as she had been at the other. The coincidence struck Mrs. Blent, and her hand closed on a full purse. There was that difference — a big one. She could afford to pay now. Even for so big a thing as the war — so she thought — not realising the cost. Every one was paying — some in easier ways than others. Her way was the easier way. She wondered what Mrs. Templar had come to the meeting for. Among the company of women assembled there, Joanna must have seemed very insignificant. Many may have wondered why she was there. A handsome woman, twice the size of Joanna, read out reports and details of cases.

"Before reading the particulars," she said, "of this case — I should like to read part of a letter I

have received that bears on the — case I would bring to your — notice. It is urgent — the case. The letter begins, as so many from France begin, with touching assurances — from loving hearts, of the last services rendered — to those whose loved ones were not there to render — those services with their own hands."

Joanna listened to the charming voice — a memory singing in her heart. The case! She wanted to hear details of the case.

"The letter goes on: — 'He died a gallant death. Any one who loved him would have been proud of him if they had seen how bravely he bore his sufferings. He would not talk about himself. The colonel came to congratulate him, but by that time the end was very near. When the colonel said something about how splendidly he had done, he just opened his eyes and said, "Coppy." I tell you this because he had once or twice before — in delirium — used the same word, and we think it was perhaps the name of a child.' "

Joanna knew — her arms slipped out before her on the polished table, her hands were clasped. For copy, Maud Chandler had said, he would marry, have children — and die.

"My daughter," went on the charming voice, "who is nursing in France, wrote that letter to me. I have made every inquiry — it is a curious case. The mother ran away with a very rich man, and went, it appears, to South America. A very nice

woman cared for the children — but she is no longer able to do it — she is ill. There are three children —"

Up rose Joanna at the end of the table. "I will take three," she said, just as years before she had said, "I will take six."

The handsome woman held up her hand, enjoining silence: "Their names are — John, Joanna — and —"

There was a pause. The little figure in black at the end of the table had "fainted," some one said.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Blent; "I can explain."

THE END

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